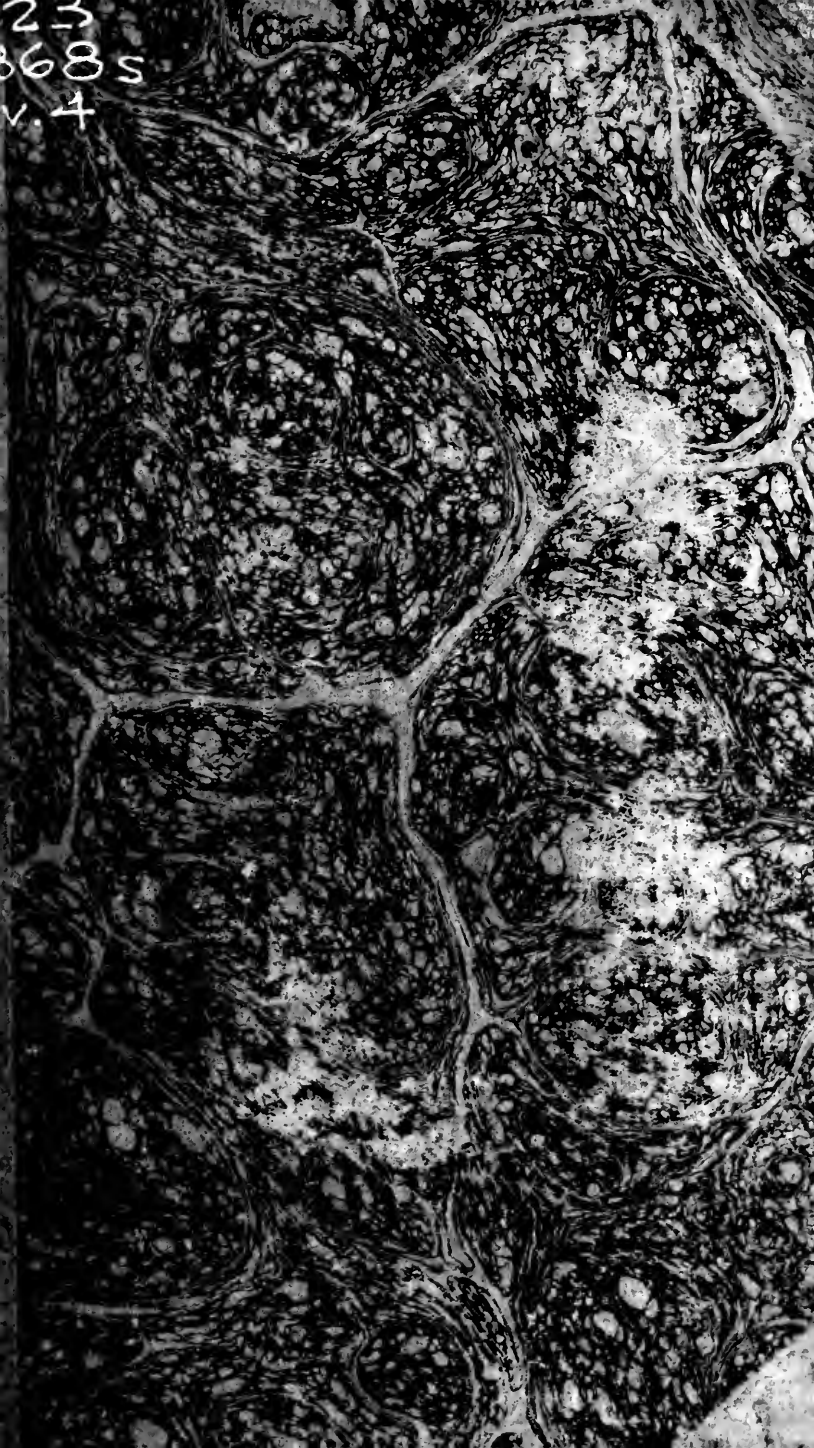


23
8685
v.4





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
H368s
v.4



Math. Michaelson

1811.



ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES:

OR,

THE OUTLAWS OF BARRA,

A SCOTTISH TRADITION.

By ELIZABETH HELME.

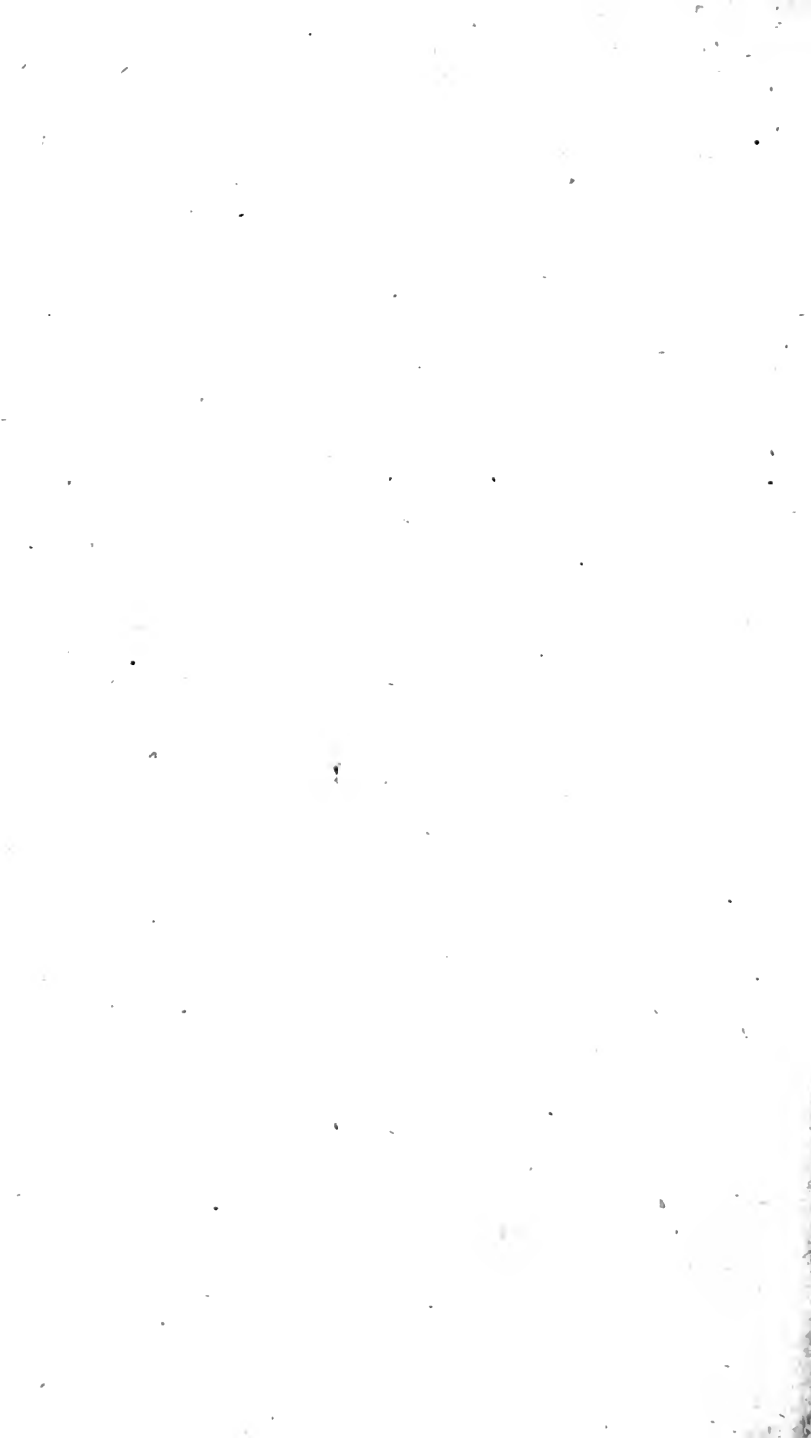
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY A. STRAHAN, PRINTERS-STREET,
FOR T. N. LONGMAN AND O. REES, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1803.



823

H 3685

v. 4

ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES:

OR,

THE OUTLAWS OF BARRA.

CHAP. I.

AFTER a stay of fourteen days, Sir Alexander desired his party to prepare for their departure; and, on the ensuing morning, they took the road to Stirling. During the way, Randolph informed the veteran, that Monteith had related to him the adventures of his youth; and spoke his own comments with great bitterness against the house of Roskelyn. Sir Alexander concurred in acknow-
VOL. IV. B ledging

ledging the injustice done to St. Clair, but, to the surprise of the youth, enforced what had been before commanded by his father, that he should seek no revenge against them; a conduct that Randolph could not think consistent with the strong friendship he professed for the injured party.

Arrived within two miles of Stirling, the sound of the bugle horn struck on their ears, and, a short time after, a stag passed them, so closely pursued by the hunters, that he rushed into a wide and rapid river, and swam over; some of the dogs followed; but even the keenest of the sportsmen checked their horses, one excepted, who rode foremost, mounted on a beautiful and spirited hunter, and who, either from want of power to curb him, or from being warmed beyond prudence in the chase, leaped down an acclivity and took the water. Sir Alexander

ander and his party had drawn aside to give them way, and to see the sport ; but their attention was in a moment directed into another channel ; the hunter who had leaped into the river, scared at the rapidity of the current, yielded to it, and, making a plunge, in a moment disengaged himself of his rider. The instant before, a silent consternation had hung on all ; but, on this sight, an universal cry of horror resounded from every quarter ;—"The king ! the king will be drowned !" exclaimed the whole party, rushing to the banks ; but the danger repressed courage, while each looked on his fellow, expecting him to offer succour. On the general outcry, Sir Alexander and his friends had approached ; when, without speaking, with an instantaneous movement, they saw Randolph throw himself from his horse, tear off his upper garment, and rush

into the water. Again all was mute astonishment, though mingled with fear and admiration. Randolph, however overpowered by the torrent, with a skill he had learned in his infancy among the islanders, swam with such dexterity, that soon enabled him to make a snatch at the king's mantle, which, girded round him, alone appeared above water. The first effort proved vain, but the second was successful ; when Randolph, finding that he had still some knowledge, said,—“ Fear nothing, my liege ; I will save or perish with you ;” so speaking, he supported him above water, until a sand-bank, which reached out into the river, stopped their progress, and which, by turning the current of the water, enabled Randolph, though with infinite difficulty, to make good his landing, keeping hold of the king's mantle till he
suc-

succeeded in dragging him also on the bank.

Randolph, though nearly exhausted, gave him all the succour in his power ; so that, before the party of huntsmen and the company of Sir Alexander had reached them, the king opened his eyes, and, being wrapped in the plaids of his surrounding nobles, was borne from the spot to the first dwelling. Randolph with his companions followed, and waited till they heard he was recovered ; after which they proceeded to Stirling.

Sir Alexander was before inclined to be partial to Randolph ; but, from this act, he formed a decided opinion,—that he was born not only to be distinguished by rank, but also by valour and humanity. The Lord of Ronaldsa too, and all his companions, spoke highly of the action ; while himself appeared uncon-

scious of doing ought save a common duty.

The next day, at an early hour, a messenger arrived to Sir Alexander, who was known to some of the courtiers. He came by order of the king ; and, in his name, requested his attendance, and also that of his young friend, whose name, however, they were unacquainted with. Sir Alexander received the summons with pleasure ; and, calling for Randolph, they departed with the messenger.

By the way, he informed them that the king still remained at the house to which he had been taken the preceding day ; and which appertained to the dowager countess of Roskelyn.

Sir Alexander started at this information ; while Randolph suddenly halting, his face flushed with crimson,—“ Noble veteran,” said he, “ you will bear my
duty

duty to the king ; my life, if need be, is at his command ; but I cannot, with patience, see a woman who hath so grossly and cruelly injured my father."

" Randolph," answered Sir Alexander, " in the absence of your father, consider me in his place ; were he here, his commands would be *obedience* : you must and shall see the young king. For the dowager, think of her as you list ; but remember that age, and, the world reports, repentance goads her. I am no priest, but the labour of a life might not have placed you in so distinguished a point of view as the single act of yesterday. Who knows what Heaven may next design ? the sight of a grandson may effect a revolution beyond your hope : you owe this duty to your father, if for yourself you decline it."

" Sir Alexander," replied Randolph, " you shall be obeyed : lead on, I follow ;

low ; but, if I see her, it will be with repugnance and hatred."

"Pish," said Sir Alexander, pleased to have so easily vanquished his scruples, "she is an old woman, and not expected to move those tender passions which would flutter about your heart at the sight of youth and beauty."

"How could I avoid regarding the woman who gave birth to my honoured father without respect and love, were she not the most abandoned and cruel of monsters?"

Again Randolph slackened his pace, and again Sir Alexander urged him with motives which he could not refute ; till they found themselves at the gate of the dowager's mansion, where they were instantly admitted.

THE king, informed of their arrival, ordered them to be conducted to the
hall,

hall, where he sat, furrounded by the first nobles of his court, who had hastened from Stirling to pay their duty, and congratulate him on his safety. Among them were his hostess the dowager, and her grand-daughter Matilda; the first of whom, even yet graceful, and of noble demeanor, did the honours of her house with a dignity peculiar to herself. She well knew the partiality of the house of M'Gregor for Monteith; but this was an occasion in which the disputes of families could not occur; and as all saw in the youth, whom they supposed his son or near relative, the preserver of the king's life, she welcomed both with apparent pleasure and kindness.

Randolph, spite of his prepossession against her, could not see her without emotion; her extreme likeness to his father, her grey hairs, and even the tone of her voice, interested him; but,

feeling his heart with the remembrance of her crimes, he followed Sir Alexander to the chair in which the king sat.

The young monarch was yet pale and faint, but, as they bent the knee before him, said,—“ Arise, I pray ye ; I yesterday felt I was yet a boy ; while your son, Sir Alexander, proved himself a man.”

“ My gracious liege,” replied the veteran, “ the sorrow of yesterday is lost in the happiness of to-day ; I rejoice at the success of my friend, but cannot claim the interest of a parent : he is not my son ; but his arm and life are devoted to the service of James the Second.”

“ And I accept them,” replied the king. “ He is not your son, you say, Sir Alexander ; that however lessens not my obligations to him ; he must be *my* friend ;—say who is his father ?”

“ A worthy,

“ A worthy, brave, but unfortunate man, my liege ; and this his son Randolph entrusted to my care, to begin his career in arms in your grace’s cause, should there be occasion.”

“ Randolph,” said the king, addressing him, “ I know not how to express my thanks ; but the world shall see that James the Second forgets not his gallant preserver : for the present, say how I may oblige you ; speak freely ; the man here that envies your fortune is his king’s enemy.”

“ My gracious lord,” replied Randolph, “ you over-rate my merit ; by being suffered to serve you, my utmost ambition will be satisfied.”

“ Not so,” replied the king ; “ thou art too modest ; but think not,” continued he gaily, “ that, though I lack beard, I lack power ; my enemies’ power is past, it ceased with my infancy, and I

will punish my oppressors, and reward my friends ; so that my subjects may have the alternative to choose. Say then, Randolph, for we part not thus, — what can I do to repay the debt I owe thee ? my father gave me life, but thou preservedst it.

“ My liege,” answered Randolph, “ for myself I have no wants.”

“ For thyself !” repeated the king ; “ hast thou then wants for others ? Speak freely, I again request, nay, command it ; I taxed thy humanity highly, when thou venturedst thy life for me ; tax my power to repay the obligation.”

“ My liege,” replied Randolph, “ there is a favour, but of such magnitude, I dare not ask it.”

“ Nay, I will know it. Is it the hand of a fair lady, thy superior in rank and fortune ? if so, thy king can, and will portion thee. Hast thou not heard I am
speedily

speedily to be wedded? thou shalt take the same day."

"No, my liege; it is a favour dearer than life or health, or any worldly blessing."

"Say it then," interrupted the king impatiently.

"It is, my liege," replied he, throwing himself at the king's feet, "the liberation of my father, St. Clair Monteith, and his gallant companions, Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and De Bourg, all of whom now suffer under your grace's displeasure, in the isle of Barra."

"Not under my displeasure; I knew it not.—But see to the dowager of Roskelyn," interrupted he; "she faints; bear her into the air; she looks sick to death."

Randolph involuntarily advanced some steps towards the dowager; but suddenly stopping,

stopping, he yielded the charge to others, who came forward to assist her.

The dowager recovered ere they bore her from the hall; and, though pale and languid, said,—“ I pray your grace excuse me, and continue the discourse my weakness broke upon; my faintness is merely the tribute of age; it will speedily wear off.”

“ I trust it will, my noble hostess,” said the king; then turning to Randolph, he added, “ did I understand you right? prisoners in the isle of Barra; and, as I should judge by their names, men of rank? On what account were they sent thither?”

Before Randolph could reply, Sir Alexander advancing, said,—“ Not prisoners, my liege, but banished men. The story is too long to relate to your grace *now*; but I will pledge my life upon their honour, and that you will
never

never have cause to repent your favour."

As Sir Alexander spoke, the direction of his eye turned upon the dowager, and her emotion, which was yet strongly apparent, convinced the young king she was by some means concerned in the relation: he therefore replied,—“ We will hear the account at more leisure: say, how long is it since their exile?”

“ Some four-and-twenty years, my liege,” replied Sir Alexander.

“ The time is sufficient to expiate even a heavy guilt: at your request they are free, Randolph; bear to them my pardon; but I expect their personal acknowledgments.”

“ They will pay them,” replied Randolph, again throwing himself at the king’s feet, and in the moment of rapture raising his hand to his lips. “ Randolph is devoted to his king for ever,”
added

added he ; “ in his cause, nor difficulty, nor death itself in its most fearful form, shall bar my passage ; the love of my royal master will be an impenetrable shield, and the wrongs of my country a sharp sword, that will at once defend me against all opponents. Oh, that at this moment I could communicate to the heart of every Scot an equal ardour to that which now burns in mine ! then should our haughty English foes flee, as heretofore they did at Bannockburn, before the valiant Robert.”

The king raised Randolph, whose noble and manly appearance, rendered doubly interesting by the subject which animated him, drew forth the commendations of the whole assembly ; even the dowager herself smothered a sigh, and almost repented that she could not own so gallant a relative.

“ See,” said the king, turning to his nobles,

nobles, “that the pardon be immediately made out. Randolph will be impatient to depart. This shall be our farewell; but I trust he will not tarry. For Sir Alexander M’Gregor, if he be not more pleasantly engaged, I trust he and his friends will attend me to Stirling, where I propose to return to-morrow.”

“To the world’s end, my liege,” replied Sir Alexander; “like Randolph, I am bound to you for ever.”

“I thank you. Prosperous gales attend thee, Randolph! The pardon, under my hand and seal, shall be sent thee forthwith.”

So saying, the king rose, and the assembly broke up; Randolph returning with Sir Alexander to Stirling.

During the way, Randolph could scarcely contain his joy; he laughed, he sung, and no sooner reached their destination than he embraced Sir Alexander:

—“My

—“ My noble friend,” exclaimed he, “ to you I owe this blessing ; but for your admonitions, I had declined to see the king, and thus had lost this glorious opportunity.”

Sir Alexander returned his salute with equal warmth.—“ Randolph,” replied he, “ thou outrunnest my wishes :—by this brave act thou hast at once redeemed thy friends and triumphed over the unnatural dowager ; didst thou not see how her conscious heart sunk, and, for a short space, suspended the motions of life ?”

“ I did, and could scarcely refrain flying to her assistance ; but a momentary recollection of my father’s wrongs arrested my steps, and I left her to her attendants.”

“ I could,” said Sir Alexander, “ almost envy you being the messenger of these glad tidings to Barra ; at least, I shall long to participate in the general joy :

joy : prudence however, as well as the king's request, will detain me here, as I had rather myself be the relater of past events, than trust them to a less honest historian. Bear to all my warmest wishes ; and say to St. Clair, that, in any account I may give the king, I shall simply confine myself to his story ; for future *developements*, I leave them to him, to be brought forward as time and convenience may suit."

Randolph promised observance ; and, though there was a couched mystery in the message of Sir Alexander to St. Clair, yet so much were his thoughts employed in the happiness of his friends, that he overlooked it.

Ronaldsa, and the rest of the party, joined their congratulations to those of the veteran ; and Frazer, who some years before had accompanied De Bourg in search of Monteith, entreating to join
Ran-

Randolph in his welcome errand to the island, they prepared for their departure, waiting impatiently till the pardon, properly executed, arrived.

Towards the close of the day, their wishes were gratified; a messenger arriving with the credentials; which Randolph secured in his bosom, and, unmindful of night or danger, after embracing his friends, departed with Fraser.

CHAP. II.

THE young king, as he proposed, left the dwelling of the dowager the ensuing morning, and returned to the castle at Stirling; where the same day Sir Alexander, in brief terms, related the oppressions of his friend St. Clair.

The king heard him with interest and attention, but gave no decided opinion at the time; though the respect with which he treated the relater, gave him reason to augur a favourable issue.

THE sight of the youth Randolph, the honour which he had gained by saving the king, his noble person, his open

open mein, but, above all, the filial affection he had shewn for his banished father, had sunk deep into the heart of the dowager of Roskelyn; and, under pretence of illness, she, after his departure, had retired to her chamber, entreating even the lady Matilda to leave her to her repose. The whole of the day she secluded herself from company; but the ensuing morning, in the hall, paid the honours due to her royal guest before his departure. Left alone with the lady Matilda, who was near seventeen, she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, and, by conversing on indifferent subjects, to divert her mind from the point to which it seemed invariably to turn. —“ Matilda, my love,” at length said she, “ you possess not your usual gaiety; either the hurry occasioned by our noble guest hath been too much for

for your spirits, or my sudden illness hath bereaved you of them."

"Neither, dear lady," replied Matilda; "if I am thoughtful, I am not sad; I rejoice that the king is safe; and my fears for you are vanished by seeing you well."

"You allow you are thoughtful, if not sad," replied the dowager; "from what cause are you so?"

"The vicissitudes of the last three days have afforded me room for reflection: the young king so near death; so providentially saved by this gallant stranger, who could forego every advantage to gain the liberation of his father and friends. Oh, had my brother lived to be such a man, how would my heart have swelled with delight, to have heard his praises!"

The dowager turned aside and suppressed a tear, but did not speak.

Matilda, warm with the subject, did not observe her emotion, but continued, —“ Oh, how must his father glory in him, so young and yet so brave. While the dastard followers of the king stood trembling on the banks, he rushed in and saved him ——”

“ Matilda,” replied the dowager, “ know ye not that he is the son of the most inveterate enemy of our house?”

“ No, lady ; he surely cannot be the son of that Monteith or M‘Crae, of whom I have heard imperfect accounts ; any one might swear by his looks, his blood was right noble : yet, if he be his son,—but it cannot be so ;—for, from what I have collected, he was an impostor.”

“ The wisdom of James the First,” answered the dowager, “ condemned his father to banishment : I should not have conjectured he could have had a son so old as this Randolph ; but ’tis plain
I was

I was mistaken. By the favour of the present king, he will again come forth to distress your father, and disgrace me; and, in the person of this proud boy, triumph over the heirless house of Roskelyn.

“ Dear lady, I trust not; Randolph looks mild and unassuming: often have I wished to hear the whole account of his father; but my parents chide me; you, perhaps, will be more kind.”

“ You will never hear it from me, Matilda; be satisfied with what you already know; you would not surely take part with the enemies of your father?”

“ Heaven forbid; I will endeavour to teach my heart to think of them with dislike and anger, unless they repent; and pray to the Virgin to turn them to friends.”

“ ’Tis your duty to hate them,” replied the countess with bitterness.

“ Alas ! I know not how : I have heard my mother talk of hatred, but cannot comprehend it. If any one offends me, I weep ; but, if doing them personal injury was to gain me worlds, I could not teach that lesson to my heart. Vengeance, lady, I have read, belongs to Heaven alone ; and in its own good time, it will doubtless fall on the head of the guilty.”

The dowager started. — “ It hath fallen,” replied she, with an involuntary emotion that alarmed Matilda. — “ A youth of distrust and fear, an age of despair and mingled repentance, and a death of falsehood and horror. — ”

Matilda was shocked ; but, in the innocence of her heart, attributed the dowager’s emotion to another source. — “ Lady,” replied she, “ Heaven may send these cruel enemies of our house true and unfeigned repentance ; in which
case,

case, hope will soothe the horrors they sustain."

"Matilda," said she, recovering her confusion, "name the disagreeable business no more; it hath been the bane of my life."

"Heaven remove it," replied she, kissing the dowager's hand; "I pray ye, pardon me; I meant no ill; the appearance of that youth alone occasioned it."

"Again that youth," returned the dowager peevishly; "surely you love the boy."

Matilda's face crimsoned with the dye of anger and modesty; but, pausing a moment, she replied,—“Yes, as I love all mankind,—no more;—but were he not, as you say, the enemy of our house, had I a brother, or should Heaven hereafter ordain me to be the mother of a son, then would I pray for them to equal

Randolph, in bravery, affection, and duty."

"Matilda," said the countess, "I will retire; do thou, in the mean time, amuse thyself with thy lute; or, attended by some of the vassals, ride and recruit thy spirits, by air and exercise."

"I will employ my time as fancy best directs," answered she: "at dinner, I trust, you will be better; the guests have wearied you, and the quiet of your chamber may wear off the impression." So saying, she attended the dowager to her apartment; and afterwards retired alone to the chapel, at a short distance from the mansion.

Matilda's mind was gentle as her person was beautiful; she loved her family, but, with an understanding above her early years, internally lamented many of its errors: the weakness of her father, though her piety considered it as merely
good

good humour and want of exertion, she was entirely aware of. At the vindictive, revengeful, and haughty spirit of her mother, she trembled; and, at the pride of the dowager to her dependants, her meek spirits recoiled. To the Holy Virgin, at the foot of the altar, she recommended all, praying for blessings on them, and pardon for their enemies; and, finally, rising with a mind fortified with devotion, she returned to the dwelling.

In the mean time, the dowager had been a prey to the anguish occasioned by her former guilt. She paced her chamber with a hurried step, and, lost in reflexion, for some time could fix her mind to no certain point. At length, throwing herself on a chair, she said, with anguish,—“ It is impossible, the road of rectitude is for ever closed to me. To have acknowledged my frailty

at the time, however painful, would long ere this have been forgotten; and I might have descended quietly to the grave amidst the prayers and blessings of a brave and lovely progeny, who now are doomed to think with detestation on me, and invoke curses on my gray hairs. I saw in Randolph's keen and marking eye, and in the glances of disdain with which he surveyed me, that he was no stranger to his father's wrongs. Matilda too, in spite of the prejudice implanted in infancy, sees him with a partiality that I can scarcely condemn. Oh would to heaven that my heart had not in youth been deaf to the voice of nature, or that it had continued so for ever !”

As she spoke, her eyes fixed on a portrait of her husband, that hung in the chamber : warmed by imagination, she fancied he looked reproachfully on her.

her.—“ Roskelyn,” said she, addressing it, “ couldst thou speak, thou wouldst reproach me with thy heirless house ; the repeated falsehoods, and even oaths, with which I bound myself to perdition, and thee perhaps to purgatory, for having weakly yielded belief to a wicked woman, against the evidence of truth and honour. Chastity, how dearly have I purchased thy semblance ; but the deed is past recall, and misery is my doom for ever !”

On the return of Matilda, she found her grandmother still agitated : unsuspecting of the real cause, she tried by every means in her power to soothe her, and at length succeeded so far, as to make her at least assume the semblance of more tranquillity.

CH A P. II.

RANDOLPH lost no time in reaching the port of Ardnamurchan; where, though the weather was tempestuous, he engaged a ship and sailed for Barra. The vessel put in at Vatersa; whence, with Fraser, he proceeded immediately to Barra. The evening was closed when they arrived, and they landed from the boat which conveyed them without being noticed by the islanders, and gained the fortress; where Randolph snatching the horn at the gate, blew a blast so loud and shrill, that the inhabitants, who were seated at supper, all started, and some instinctively laid their hands upon their swords. The alarm, however, was
of

of short duration ; for the cry of “ Welcome ! welcome ! ’tis young master Randolph ! ” resounded in a moment from every quarter.

“ Randolph ! impossible,” exclaimed Monteith, advancing ; but, before he could reach the entrance of the hall, he was met by the youth ; whose mind, too highly raised by joy to admit of words, threw himself into his arms and embraced him with such unbounded transport, that the chief almost feared his senses were deranged.

The words of dear boy, good brother, friend, Randolph, greeted him on every side ; but replying to none, and disengaging himself from the arms of Monteith, he tore open his breast, and, with energetic silence, drew forth a parchment and presented it to the chief.

The conduct of Randolph rendered all mute as himself with astonishment ;

till St. Clair, starting at sight of the royal signet on the parchment, tore it open, and, with an indistinct voice, read :

“ Know all men by these presents, that I, James the Second, King of Scotland, being indebted to Randolph Monteith for no less than the preservation of my life, have at his especial request, he refusing all other reward, granted to his prayers a free and unlimited pardon to his father, St. Clair Monteith, and his adherents, James Ross, Alan Hamilton, James M'Gregor, and Phillip De Bourg, now in banishment on the island of Barra ; restoring them to their honours ; and requiring only, in return, their duty as faithful subjects.

Given at the palace of Stirling,

April 6, 1448.

JAMES the Second, King.”

On

On hearing the pardon, the phrenzied transport of Randolph, in some measure, appeared transferred to all ; some congratulated, some questioned, and others embraced him, all eager to learn the particulars of so happy an event ; but their anxious curiosity defeating its purposes ; Randolph, in the interim, becoming more collected, threw himself at the feet of the Lady Ambrosine ; who, pressing him to her bosom, called down the blessing of Heaven upon his head. Phillippa hung on his neck ; while her brothers James and St. Clair clasped his arms : and thus, surrounded by the whole party, he found himself in the most enviable of all situations,—the liberator of his family, and the benefactor of his friends.”

“ Father, brothers, friends,” at length exclaimed he, “ I am happy ; my heart overflows : I would not exchange this

hour for a monotonous life of an hundred years. For the first time, I joy to see my mother's and sister's tears ; they are the tears of satisfaction ; never, never may they weep from any other cause."

" By Heaven," said Monteith, " we bore misfortune like men, but we receive joy like children : take each a goblet of wine,—the pledge, King James and our deliverer Randolph."

The chief was obeyed ; each drank the pledge ; even Ambrosine and Philippa could not decline it : and, the first transport moderated, they took their seats.

" By my faith," said De Bourg, " a plentiful libation of water, instead of wine, would be most proper for me ; for my blood already rushes through my veins with such rapidity, and my heart beats with such velocity, that I can hardly
trust

trust my senses.—Prithee, dear Randolph, tell us how all this has happened; the recital will restore us to reason.”

“ Not to-night, chevalier; I am too happy to be sufficiently collected; be satisfied with knowing it is reality: to-morrow is soon enough for particulars.”

“ Not so,” answered Monteith; “ like De Bourg, I shall be in a fever with expectation before to-morrow; and so will all our friends; in which case, thy story will be of no use to deaf ears.”

“ Frazer hath been Randolph’s companion,” said M’Gregor; “ from him we will intreat the relation.”

All joining in this request, Frazer complied, and informed them of every particular since they left Barra.

Randolph, in the mean time, was seated between Ambrosine and Philippa; he held a hand of each, and, in answer to the praises they bestowed on

I

him,

him, raised them frequently to his lips ; in the joy of his heart forgetting even the horror he had conceived at the thought of loving Phillippa beyond the bounds of brotherly affection.

The relation ended, congratulations and praise again took place; till Randolph cut them short, by reminding them, that the more speedy they were in paying their duty to the young king, the more welcome it would be.—“For me,” said he, “I will away again to-morrow; after the favour conferred upon me, I should be unpardonable to neglect any proof of attachment: we shall, I trust, meet again at Stirling.”

“Not so,” answered Monteith; “we will all away together. What say’st thou, Ambrosine, when canst thou be ready to depart?”

“ Even when you list,” replied she ;
 “ I consider myself a soldier’s wife,
 whose

whose duty it is to be ever ready. If the fastidious dames of the court find us a few years behind the fashion, they will laugh ; but what we need in mode, we will make up in happiness ; and surely the balance will be in our favour."

" The Lady Ambrosine will ever be the same," said Hamilton.

" In faith will she," returned Monteith ; " the shafts of time hath flown over her person with as little effect as those of confinement have over her mind, neither of which eighteen years have had the power to change."

" The courtly air hath begun to reach you already," replied she ; " for you flatter like prime ministers ; but enough of this trifling ; we will be ready when you please : you will arrange the business that may be necessary."

" I will," replied Monteith : " our cattle, and what stock may be found here,

here, we will leave to William to distribute among our poorer neighbours, whom I will visit the first opportunity. For the present, the domestics of the fortress shall remain, and, as they are truly faithful, shall afterward join us, either at Kintail or Monteith, if you be willing."

"I am pleased with the arrangement; my preparations and those of Phillippa will soon be made; for the present, let us retire. Randolph and Frazer need rest: we will meet early to-morrow."

All agreed, and an immediate separation took place for the night. The events of the evening, however, deprived the greater part of rest; and the tumult of joy somewhat subsided in Randolph's bosom, all his former fears resumed their place, and he resolved, whatever it might cost him, to use all his persuasion to forward a marriage between Phillippa
and

and the Lord of Ronaldsa : to engage himself in the most active manner for the defence of his country ; to obliterate the remembrance of his unintentional error even from himself, by a life of honour ; or to seek death in the field of glory.

In the morning all met with more calmness, and, exerting themselves in preparation, quitted Barra the following day, William being left in trust for the islanders.

A brisk gale brought them safe to the port, where, procuring horses, they proceeded to Monteith ; where they were received as men risen from the dead, by the vassals who survived, but most particularly by father Thomas, who, delighted to hear of their return, with an effort not to be expected from his years, came out at the head of the dependants, to meet and welcome them.

Monteith

Monteith embraced him, and presented his wife and children, whom the old man alternately admired and blessed; till at length turning to St. Clair, he said: "Great have been your vexations, my son, but great have been your blessings also; a fairer family never graced a monarch's board; may their virtues equal your warmest wishes, and gild the evening of your days with a splendor sufficient to make you forget past sorrows."

One day given to repose, they proceeded the next to Stirling, where the king yet remained; resolved to make that duty the first object of their care.

C H A P. IV.

ARRIVED at the palace, they were joined by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who, after mutual congratulations, informed them, that it was the hour of audience, and that he would immediately inform the king of their arrival, and return his answer respecting either their present or future attendance. The king was seated amidst his nobles, giving audience to the ambassador of France, who brought him congratulations on his intended alliance with Mary, the daughter of the duke of Gueldres.

The business terminated, and the ambassador withdrawn, Sir Alexander, approaching the throne, informed the king, that

that his friends were arrived, and craved leeve to pay their duty.

“ By mine honour,” said the king, “ but they have lost no time ; this haste pleases me well ; let them enter ; but to Randolph be the distinction paid of their introduction.”

Sir Alexander obeyed ; and, though Randolph would fain have excused himself from the office imposed on him, yet all pressing obedience to the king’s command, he advanced first into the presence chamber.

Reaching the foot of the throne, all bent the knee ; Randolph saying, — “ My liege, I present my parents and friends, whose deeds more than their words will, I trust, testify their gratitude.”

“ I doubt it not,” answered the king : “ I pray ye rise ; in the confusion and wars that threaten us, I cannot spare a company of such gallant men : — women too,”

too," continued he, fixing his eyes on Ambrosine and Phillippa; "the fairest my eyes ever beheld. In faith, if my father had the heart to banish these, he possessed more resolution than his son will ever have to boast."

"My liege," replied Monteith, "your father had not that cruelty: this lady," taking Ambrosine's hand, "hath been, or she flatters, a willing prisoner almost eighteen years."

"Monteith, as I should judge," said the king, "from his likeness to Randolph."

"The same, and your grace's devoted servant."

"I thank you," replied he: "your wife and daughter then I guess?"

"Yes, my liege."

"Eighteen years, did you say, your companion in banishment? In truth, lady, your face and form might give the
lie

lie to the world, who would never credit your being a wife at that period."

"A good husband, my liege, is a preservative against wrinkles; while women love they wish to please; and, in the solitude of Barra, no contentions arose to disturb our tranquillity."

"Speedily do I expect my bride," said the king: "you will oblige me by gracing our court on her arrival. Lady," added he, turning to Phillippa, "she is of your age; and, if she possesses but half your personal advantages, I shall be happy."

"My liege," answered Phillippa modestly, "could my wishes or prayers prevail, she should not only be the fairest, but the best of women, that she might be worthy the distinguished fate allotted her."

"I thank you." Then turning to Monteith and his friends, he added, smiling,

smiling, "I crave your excuse, but the fault is in yourselves; if ye wish me to pay you proper attention hereafter, bring not these magnets with you."

He then received the thanks of all with graceful ease and kindness; and, entering into discourse, informed them, that the English, in strong force, had committed several outrages on the borders.

"My liege," replied Monteith, "myself and friends crave a respite of one month, after which our lives are devoted to your service; so long a banishment hath rendered us almost strangers at home."

The king acquiesced; and the court soon after broke up.

The following day, Ross, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and De Bourg, returned with St. Clair and his family to the castle of Monteith; leaving Randolph and Ronaldsa

naldsa to accompany Sir Alexander to the English borders.

The power of example was not without its effect on Phillippa, who, though she felt as much sorrow at parting from Randolph as when he left Barra, yet it was more confined to her own bosom; and, throwing a plaid of her own work over his shoulders, she said,—“ Go, my beloved brother, and Heaven guard and direct thee! but, ere thou rush into needless danger, let this tartan remind thee of thy sister Phillippa.”

Randolph pressed her to his bosom, and tore himself from her embrace in silence. Like the poisoned garment of Hercules, the plaid appeared to penetrate to his heart, and he was more than once tempted to cast it from him; a moment's reflexion, however, restrained him.—“ 'Tis but the gift of a sister,” said he mentally; “ I will rise above such weakness.

ness. In every chequer I can trace her lovely fingers; and, should I ever doubt myself, the initials of the revered names of Randolph and Monteith, with the device of the golden eagle, which I dare not disgrace, will recall me to duty and honour."

The party at Monteith gave but one day to repose, when they all took their way to their several domains, first agreeing to meet in the same spot as speedily as possible: St. Clair's destination was Kintail and the isles, in which he was accompanied by De Bourg.

At the request of Monteith, Ambrosine, after his departure, with her children, attended the court of Stirling, where, at that period, the nobility of the whole kingdom were assembled; and, among them, the Lord of Roskelyn, his wife, and mother.

Though polite and gracious to all, the king particularly distinguished the family of Monteith; a distinction that caused some jealousy, but in no bosom so much as in that of Lady Roskelyn, who saw with the bitterest rancour and hatred the triumph of her rival, not only in royal favour, but also in grace and loveliness; and surrounded by children whose youthful appearance promised to transmit to posterity, at once the dignity and valour of their father, and the sweetness and beauty of their mother.

The Lord of Roskelyn viewed them also with jealousy; but his disposition in some measure resembling his father's, favoured more of weakness than of wickedness, and, deprived of the stimulant of the dowager's remonstrances, which had entirely ceased since the death of the Lord John, and, by experience, acquainted with the malignancy of his wife,

wife,—his feelings were confined to his own bosom, and caused him only, as he considered the sons of Monteith, to sigh anew for the loss of his own.

The dowager saw them with sentiments different from either : her pride disappointed by the death of her grandson, the inherent love of transmitting her honours and her name to posterity, caused a revolution in her heart, that virtue and nature had in vain striven to effect ; and proudly now would she, had such a claim been practicable, at a less sacrifice than the dreadful avowal of her guilt and cruelty, have acknowledged them her lawful descendants.

“ Lady,” said the king to Ambrosine, “ your husband, I presume, is a truant from home, or we should have seen him.”

“ My liege,” answered she, “ both love and duty would have brought him
D 2 hither,

hither, had he not been so : he is gone to Kintail, as are his friends to [their different estates, but they will speedily return.”

“ Our friend Randolph is with Sir Alexander,” resumed he, “ in this his first campaign ; your heart is not without fears on his account ? ”

“ Hope overbalances fear, my liege ; Randolph, I trust, will return with honour ; ’tis time he should take an active part in the service of his country. My sons, James and St. Clair, think of his departure with envy ; though their father hath promised the first that he shall not long remain inactive.”

“ Lady,” said the king, “ you are worthy to be the mother of heroes, who can thus nobly devote them to the general good.”

“ My liege, a mother’s right in her son’s is secondary : the girls be mine ;
I will

I will teach them those duties I endeavour to practise ; but for the boys, the cares of childhood past, their education should devolve on their father. Monteith, my lord, I trust, you will find a brave man ; and his sons otherwise, I would forget the mother and disclaim them."

" If I have sons," said the king, " I would you should have the care of their infancy, lady ; your understanding would make them enthusiasts in the cause of glory, and your beauty and sweetness imprint your lessons on their hearts."

Ambrosine passed over the compliment with chearful politeness ; and, the court over, returned to the apartments she occupied at Stirling.

Sir Alexander and his party, in the mean time, proceeded to join Sir John

Douglas, who was marching for England. Reposing within a short distance of Roskelyn, Randolph could not resist the inclination of inquiring after his friend Jean ; and, taking Ronaldsa with him, as being totally unknown, they proceeded to the castle. On inquiry among the vassals for the maiden Jean, who some years before attended on the countess, Ronaldsa was informed that she resided with her mother, a short distance from the castle ; and, at his request, they pointed out the cottage.

This information procured, they proceeded thither ; when Randolph striking at the door, the well remembered voice of Jean bid them enter. Surprise deprived the maid of utterance ; but, though her satisfaction was extreme, it was restrained by the situation of her mother, who, supported in her chair, appeared overwhelmed with sickness.

“ Dear

“ Dear Jean,” said Randolph, “ I rejoice to see you ; yet, if this be your mother, we meet in a sorrowful hour.”

“ Gracious master,” answered Jean, “ for you are, I now well know, of noble blood ; the sight of you gladdens my heart. Dear mother,” added she, turning to her suffering parent, “ this is that generous Randolph who was so kind to me when I was with the countess, and who even now, after so long a time, hath not forgotten me ; but, by St. Mary ! if his features had not been imprinted on my heart, I should not have known him, he is grown so tall and portly.”

The sight of one of whom the old matron had heard so much, appeared for a time to alleviate the pangs she endured. — “ Noble sir,” said she, “ my thanks and blessings rest upon you ; the money your goodness gave hath preserved life

in my shattered frame longer than it would have lingered ; and Jean left the countess without anger."

" I rejoice to hear it ; I have not forgotten my obligations to her, though I fear, in so long an interval, she doubtless never expected to see me more."

" In truth I did not," replied Jean, " and I grieved at it."

" The neglect was unavoidable," answered he : " I go now to meet our enemies on the English borders ; and, as the event of such encounters is uncertain, resolved to see you by the way. The bounty of my parents hath enabled me to testify my gratitude ; and, on consulting my mother, she requests you would henceforward consider her as your friend ; and, if not attached to your cottage at Roskelyn, repair to Monteith, where you shall find my words verified."

As

As Randolph spoke, he approached the dame, and dropped his purse into her lap:—"I must not be refused," said he; "this will enable you to reach Monteith."

“ Holy mother ! you are too good,” replied she hastily ; “ but pardon my boldness ; and suffer me to look on the plaid in which you are wrapped.”

“Willingly,” answered he, “’tis the gift of a sister dearer to me than ought in life but honour.”

“ A golden eagle, and the letters R. M.,” said the old woman ; “ these, then, belong to the noble house of Monteith ; gentle sir, do they not ? ”

“ They do ; but why ask you ? ” replied he, with some astonishment.

“ Dear mother,” interrupted Jean,
“ weary not our kind guest with ques-
tions ; that eagle hath so bewildered your
D 5 brain,

brain, that it makes you regardless of every other object."

"Peace, Jean," replied Randolph, "give your mother her way.—Speak, good dame, I am ready to answer any question you may wish to ask."

"My gracious master, I know I am troublesome; yet my motive is not merely curiosity: I inherited from my mother a filken handkerchief, which bears this same wrought golden eagle, and, though not the letters R. M., those of M. M.; and which she came by in a mysterious manner."

Randolph's curiosity was completely raised.—"Shew it me, good dame," said he.

"Alas!" replied she, "my folly hath bereaved me of it; but, as well as my weakness will permit, I will relate by what means we came possessed of it. My mother was a midwife, and dwelt in the city

city of Edinburgh. When I was about the age of ten or twelve, she was one day fetched by a man in a sailor's habit, to attend his wife, who was in labour in the suburbs. She immediately accompanied him; and, on her arrival, was introduced into a chamber, which was too much darkened to distinguish particular objects. On a bed lay the person she was called to attend; and who, though visited with severe pangs, suffered no word to escape her. Though there was no light, my mother was convinced she was not the sailor's wife; for her linen, she could feel, was of the finest texture, and the mantle which was thrown over her was of velvet. The woman who attended her, said she was her sister: and the business ended by the birth of a boy, my mother was dismissed, being first paid for her trouble by the man.

“ Previous to her leaving the room, she put on her plaid, and covered her head with a handkerchief; but the darkness beguiled her, and, instead of her own handkerchief, she tied on one which had been thrown from the neck of the mother of the infant.

“ On reaching home in the evening, she carelessly cast her outward garments into a chest; and it was near a month before she discovered the theft she had unwittingly been guilty of. She then hied to the house, but the sailor and his wife were gone, nor could she gain any tidings of them; she, however, carefully preserved the handkerchief during her life, and, at her death, left it to me, thinking it might lead to a discovery of moment to some noble family.”

Randolph had no doubt of the concealed person being the present dowager
of

of Roskelyn, and the infant then born St. Clair.—“ But how did you lose the handkerchief,” said he, “ my good dame?”

“ I did not lose it,” answered she. “ After the death of my mother, I wedded, and my husband dying, after we had lived together some years, leaving me with child of Jean, who is the only one remaining of six, I was engaged to suckle the eldest born of the Earl of Roskelyn, the sweet Montrose, of whom you have doubtless heard—”

“ Not much,” interrupted Randolph; “ but to the handkerchief, dame; the house of Roskelyn interests me not, and the time is short.”

“ In confidence then,” answered the dame, “ I told the story to the young Countess of Roskelyn; and she never let me rest till she obtained the handkerchief; and, by her eagerness to have it,

it, frequently have I thought she guessed at the owner.”

Ronaldsa reminded Randolph that their time of absence was nearly elapsed; when asking only a few minutes, he demanded of the matron, whether she experienced the protection of the Lady Roskelyn. Being answered in the negative, he added :—“ No tie then detains you at Roskelyn ; haste, therefore, to the castle of Monteith, ye have money for that purpose, and will there find an asylum. Relate this story to my father the chief, or to his lady ; they are better acquainted than I am with the secrets of the family, and, should any inquiry into this business be necessary, they will make it. Farewell ; the confusions that vex us once over, I trust we shall meet in happiness.” So saying, he shook both by the hand, and, amidst the blessings

sings of the matron and the tears of Jean, left the cottage.

Mounting their horses, they soon reached Edinburgh ; and, the following morning, proceeded towards the borders.

CHAP. V.

THE anger of the English, kindled by the encreased friendship of France and Scotland, began now not only to threaten, but also to spread desolation. The town of Dumfries was fired in an attack commanded by the Earl of Salisbury; and that of Dunbar shared the same fate by a party appertaining to the Earl of Northumberland.

The Scots, in return, under the command of Sir John Douglas, entered England, burned Alnwick, and plundered the adjoining counties.

Fresh levies being necessary to both parties, a short cessation of arms ensued; and the Scottish party under Sir Alexander

ander M'Gregor returned to Stirling, where the king remained. All the nobility unemployed in active service, flocked round the sovereign; and, among others, the family of Roskelyn, who, though vexed at the apparent partiality for Monteith, were too proud to shew the feelings they endured, and which absenting themselves on so public an occasion would plainly have revealed.

Monteith and his friends were not yet returned, and the Lady Ambrosine remained with the court; when, one morning, the whole city was put into consternation, by the report of an army being in full march from the north; and which from the heights they could discover by their burnished weapons, covered at times the plains, or, at others, winding round the hills, made them appear a mass of moving matter.

Alarmed

Alarmed at this intelligence, all felt it according to their different characters ; the dastardly climbing the eminences to view the danger at a distance ; while the more valiant girded on their swords to repel it. Among the latter was Randolph and Ronaldsa ; though both remarked the tardiness of Sir Alexander, and that the animation that usually enlivened his features in cases of danger, went now no farther than a sarcastic smile at the fears of some, and the preparations of others.

“ This formidable power,” said Sir Alexander ironically, “ is yet at a considerable distance, and our army is prepared to meet danger, should it approach.—The Lord of Ronaldsa and Randolph, I have had proofs during the campaign, are both brave fellows and good horsemen ; let them away and reconnoitre this enemy, and bring us such
intelli-

intelligence as may enable us to meet them in a proper manner.”

The king acquiesced ; and the young men, pleased with the commission, departed ; and, ere night-fall, came sufficiently near not only to know the number of the party that had given them such alarm, but to be informed of their destination, in a parley they held with the commanders.

Fraught with this intelligence, Randolph and his friend returned to Stirling, at an early hour the ensuing day, where they found the council assembled. Covered with dust and perspiration, the young men, almost breathless with haste, entered ; but, before either spoke, the intelligence of their features foretold their errand. — “ My mind is already relieved,” said the king ; “ the looks of both betoken good.—Speak, Randolph, what are the number of this formidable power ;

power ; from whence do they come ; and by whom are they commanded ?”

“ My liege,” replied Randolph, “ in the front march six hundred of the vassals of Kintail and Monteith, followed by one thousand hardy men from the Western Isles ; both commanded by my honoured father and the chevalier De Bourg.

“ The right wing consists of five hundred men, dependants of the domain of Ross ; led by their noble chief, Sir James.

“ The left wing contains the same number, commanded by the brave Allan Hamilton ; and the whole is closed by six hundred, led by the brother of Sir Alexander, the worthy friend of my youth, James M‘Gregor : in all, my liege, three thousand two hundred men.”

“ And for what come they thus formidably ?” demanded the king.

“ To

“ To defend their country, and, if need be, with their bodies to make a rampart round their sovereign, and perish to a man in his defence.”

“ You have spoken then with them?” said the king.

“ Yes, my liege ; when I saw their banners displayed, I joined them ; and bring from their joint commanders this message : that they will encamp in the dell, at about four miles from the town, and there wait your grace’s orders.”

“ We will meet them there,” replied the king.—Then turning to Sir Alexander, he added : “ Chief, this is a pleasurable surprise, or I would not forgive you the deception ; for, I think, you knew it.”

“ I did, my gracious lord ; for this purpose only my friends hastened from the court : but even Randolph was ignorant of their intention.”

“ Was

“ Was the Lady Ambrosine acquainted with it ? ” said the king.

“ She was, my liege ; and, lest the busy rumour of her husband’s collecting men should reach your ear through the false medium of slanderous enemies, who might belie his loyal motives, she remained at Stirling with her children, a voluntary hostage for his honour.”

“ A noble lady,” said the king ; “ she realises what we read of Roman women :—haste ye, I pray, to her dwelling, and intreat her to accompany us to meet the chief.”

The veteran accepted the commission with pleasure, and the court broke up. Among the courtiers attached to the Lord of Roskelyn, there was not wanting some who endeavoured to dissuade the king from meeting the party of Monteith and his friends ; but he was deaf to their remonstrances ; and news arriving that
they

they had reached their destination, a gallant cavalcade assembled and proceeded to the dell.

The tops of the houses of Stirling were covered, and the road lined with spectators : a guard rode first to clear the way ; after which followed music ; then the officers of state ; and then the sovereign ; on his right hand the Lady Ambrosine, on his left Phillippa. Next followed Sir Alexander M'Gregor, Randolph, and Ronaldsa ; then the sons of Monteith and the nobles of the kingdom, attended by a numerous and splendid retinue.

It may readily be conjectured, the Lord of Roskelyn was not among the number ; with his countess he had retired to the house of the dowager, where curiosity was sufficiently active to make them privately view the cavalcade.

The

The sight had different effects on the party. Roskelyn, weary with vexation, viewed it in silence; the dowager, in spite of herself, felt the pride of seeing her descendants so highly graced; while the heart of the countess, swelling with rancour and envy, would at that moment have yielded all farther expectation, for the power of annihilating her detested rival at the same moment with herself.

The warm and innocent heart of Matilda alone openly revealed its sentiments; while her parents, versed in hypocrisy, concealed theirs.—“ Oh, what noble, gallant men,” exclaimed she, “ what beautiful women; see how the king smiles upon them: no wonder, were I in his place, I would bestow my hand and heart as willingly on that young maid as —”

“ I bestow that blow on thee,” interrupted the Lady Roskelyn, in a paroxysm

of rage ; “ a curse on the whole party : forward minx as thou art, repeat my words, lest I curse *thee*.”

“ Nay, patience, good Ellen,” said the Lord of Roskelyn, “ you forget yourself ; Matilda knows them not, and curses besit not such youthful lips.”

“ Curse on them twofold,” repeated she madly, “ and a treble curse on the hour in which I became a Roskelyn.— See, see the proud wife of the outlaw Monteith on the right hand of the king ; see how she smiles.— Oh for a dagger to plunge in her exulting heart !”

“ Lady Roskelyn,” said the dowager haughtily, “ these fancies become not a wife who respects her husband’s honour ; my son was the man of your choice.”

“ *Your son* was the man of my choice ; —your *eldest* son, lady, can you deny that ?”

“ You had better retire to your chamber, Ellen,” said Roskelyn; “ retirement and quiet will calm the agitation of your mind.”

The dowager’s spirit was as vindictive as that of the Lady Roskelyn, though she held it in more command; and, stung with the freedom of her daughter-in-law’s speech, she replied: “ Such humours are not befitting the world’s eye; they are marks of a husband’s pusillanimity. In such case, confinement, a zealous confessor, strict diet, and constant penance, would do well to bring the mind to a proper state.”

“ Ha! ha! ha! when devils preach, let puny sinners laugh.—Ha! ha! ha! do you talk of a husband’s pusillanimity? *you*, who have broken through every duty, do you talk of confinement, zealous confessors, and a strict diet? Of constant penances, you are indeed a good judge;

judge; for I am well convinced you have endured them for many years, and will to your last hour."

"Dearest mother," said Matilda, "let me attend you to your apartment; I will soothe you to sleep with my harp."

"Sooner shalt thou soothe the turbulence of the sea: away, base girl, thou hast not yet curst my enemies."

"I pray you, Ellen, give way," said Roskelyn; "Matilda advises well; let me lead you forth."

Lady Roskelyn flung from him with mingled anger and disdain; while the dowager regarded both with contempt, and said: "When husbands condescend too much, they give their wives a power that renders them ridiculous: could I have expected to see my son thus treated by the daughter of Sir David Stuart, I would have avoided the connexion as I would the pestilence."

“ I conjure you, mother, cease ; my wife is not well, and you but increase her agitation, and will disorder yourself.”

“ If her head should ache, we will bind it,” said Lady Roskelyn, “ with a curious handkerchief I have in my possession, of black and scarlet, wrought in the corner with the device of Monteith, and the initials M. M. ; formerly in the possession of a midwife, who attended the wife of M^cCrae.”

This blow on the dowager was unexpected ; though so many years back, she well recollected the handkerchief that had been lost ; but, as inquiry would but have exposed her, it had been declined, and she had hoped, after so long an interval, it was totally unknown.

“ When you condescend to speak intelligibly,” replied the dowager, “ I will commune with you ; until then it is useless. — For you, Roskelyn, when you
have

have taught your wife the duty due to you, and the respect necessary to me, I shall be ready to receive you."

With these words, she quitted the apartment; leaving Matilda in tears, the Lord Roskelyn in silent consternation, and his countess too much involved in her own vexations to give heed to either.

CHAP. VI.

THE king and his party advanced within a mile of the dell, when they saw a company of five horsemen approaching ; and whom they soon recognized for Monteith, Ross, De Bourg, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, entirely unattended.

Reaching the king's company, they saluted the sovereign ; who, checking his horse, said : “ You are right welcome ; but why meet me here ? we meant to join you at your camp.”

“ My liege,” said Monteith, “ we learned with pride and satisfaction your grace's intentions ; but, suspecting that some of our enemies might endeavour to
empoison

empoison your ear with doubts of our loyalty ; we resolved thus to come forth, and, if any suspicion rested on your mind, to put ourselves alone into your power.”

“ Monteith,” replied the king, “ your deeds and those of your friends, give the lie to your enemies’ words : I will judge for myself, and venture to predict, that I shall never repent the step I have taken on your account.”

Monteith and his friends bowed, and, at the king’s request, led the way to the camp, where they were received with repeated acclamations of satisfaction.”

“ Long live James the Second ! Perish the enemies of the King of Scotland ! Led on by our valiant commanders, we will conquer or die !”

The king walked through the whole camp, and expressed his thanks to all ; desiring that whatever might be wanting

in clothes, weapons, or accoutrements, might be supplied from the public stores.

After passing a considerable time with the party, the king and his cavalcade returned to Stirling, Monteith attending him, leaving the command for a few hours with his companions.

On their return, they again passed the dwelling of the dowager; and again distracted the mind of the countess, who remained immoveably fixed at the window. The king was now conversing with Sir Alexander and Sir John Douglas; after whom followed Monteith and Ambrosine, whose mutual looks of affection wounded her yet more deeply than the sight of the distinction paid her rival had done before: no word, however, escaped her, till the whole party had passed, when, starting from her seat, she said: “ My lord, I will away for Roskelyn to-night; Matilda shall accompany me :

me: for you, at your own time you will follow."

Roskelyn, though displeased, gave way; he was well aware of the anger he should incur from his mother by recalling the Lady Matilda, a step which he knew was more to vex the dowager than from any affection to her daughter: yet, needing the courage to contend with so vindictive a spirit, he simply acquiesced, and bade her use her pleasure.

Informed of the arrangement, the anger of the dowager appeared to change its object; she reproached her son for his want of spirit, and vowed an implacable enmity to the countess; then finally quitting him, bade him with great passion take the consequence.

Roskelyn, goaded by two such furies, would almost have given his life to be clear of both; but, yielding to the

power of his wife, he prepared to accompany her.

The horses ready, the Lady Matilda, with tears, embraced her grandmother; and, joining her parents, they quitted Stirling.

The dowager left alone, her proud and active spirit endured a severe conflict: the mention of the handkerchief, lost so many years before at the house of M'Crae, drove her almost to madness, as it convinced her she was in the power of her daughter-in-law; not that she feared any disclosure on her part, as it must tend to lessen her own consequence, but that it subjected her to insult and scorn which she could not brook. The weakness of her son, in yielding blind obedience to his wife, next wrought upon her fancy, and, though his conduct was not more so than that of his father had been in regard to herself, she saw it
through

through a different medium, and considered it as pusillanimous and despicable. Matilda alone interested her; for, though their characters were as opposite as the eagle and the dove, yet the gentleness of the one had insensibly stifled the violence of the other, and entirely gained her affection; removing her, therefore, was another insult beyond forgiveness: yet, to counterbalance this affection in the dowager's estimation, she was only a girl, and her name would be lost in marriage; consequently, the property she had been years accumulating (for the late Earl of Roskelyn left great sums in her own power) would only contribute to enrich some other family.

To contrast the family of Roskelyn, that of Monteith rose in her memory; self-ennobled and brave, the chief was universally regarded as a man superior to his fellows, the idolizing husband of

a wife beyond comparison good and fair,—neither by word or action lessening the consequence of each other.

Randolph came next, with James and St. Clair; the first had begun the career of glory, and promised to yield to none. James, young as he was, already looked the chief, and was said to burn with impatience to emulate his father and brother; while the young St. Clair, inferior to neither in future promise, appeared only to need years to equal his elders.

The beauty of Phillippa, which was an universal theme, was not without a place in her remembrance; as she conjectured that, added to the consequence of her father, it must match her into one of the first families in the kingdom: but even that was a secondary consideration, and Phillippa and Matilda fell into the shade before the superior claims of the
three

three boys, who might transmit her boasted name and rank to posterity.

Agitated with these reflexions, she at length retired to rest ; but, though her body was wearied and sunk into inactivity, her mind still dwelt on its former pursuits, and rendered her rest broken and unrefreshing. M'Crae and his wife first mingled with her dreams ; but waking, and striving to overcome the impression, she again composed herself to sleep. The second was more fearful. Death, as represented by painters and poets, a form of uncovered bones, with eyeless skull, and holding in his hand a scythe, appeared to advance towards her couch ; but was restrained by her husband, who cried with a mournful voice to the spectre,—“ *Yet, yet a little time I conjure thee ;*—while her brother, the late chief Monteith, on the other hand, said

said audibly, — “ *Woman, awake, prepare —* ”

Her fears rendered the sentence unfinished ; she awoke trembling in every limb, the cold dews of perspiration standing in drops on her brows. — “ *Gracious Virgin !, how terrible !* ” said she ; and, throwing herself from her bed, she gazed round the apartment, for the moment expecting to see her dream realized : the horrors were, however, confined to her own bosom ; and, calling to her waiting woman, who slept in the next chamber, she resolved to retire no more that night.

The rising of the sun tended, in some measure, to calm the dowager’s spirits ; and her family remarked no change from her usual conduct : the dream, was, however, impressed upon her memory too deeply to be forgotten.

C H A P. VII.

THE party of Monteith, recruited by a few days rest, it was resolved they should march forward to the English borders. A select council sat daily; and Monteith and his friends, as they were known, became more estimable to the sovereign.

One evening previous to their departure, the king being in his closet, with only the chancellor, one of the attendants informed him, that a woman of noble port, but whose face was concealed by the mourning weeds she wore, craved admittance to his presence. The king ordered her to be brought in; when the attendant being withdrawn, he expected her to speak; but, for some
minutes,

minutes, sighs were only audible; till, weary with such a dumb scene, he requested her to inform him of the business which had induced her to break on his privacy.

“ My liege,” replied she, “ I have a story of sin and shame to relate, which might make any woman pause, and which nothing but the pangs of conscience could force me to reveal.”

“ Lady,” replied the king, “ your voice is familiar to my ear; would it be too much to ask to see your face?”

“ My lord, I came prepared. A fear of the world hath hitherto been the bane of my life; to avoid disgrace, I have plunged into guilt, which, without repentance, must condemn me to everlasting perdition. A few words to your highness, and I have done with it for ever: behold then the dowager of Roskelyn,” continued she, throwing back the covering
ring

ring from her face ; “ she comes to reveal the shame which forty-five years she hath striven to conceal. My liege, spare me particulars ; but, by all the saints and holy host of angels ! I blush to confess that St. Clair Monteith is my son, my eldest born by the Lord of Roskelyn : in an hour of weakness I yielded before marriage, and with cruelty denied my child to conceal my disgrace : even to my lord I did never retract the falsehood I at first told him, that the unhappy boy died at his birth ; lest his paternal feelings should cause him to acknowledge him to the world, and thus avow my want of chastity. To my second son, now called Lord Roskelyn, I have been more explicit, though never entirely so ; and we both, by our conduct, appeared to know a secret which we dreaded to disclose to each other.”

Of

“ Of this tale, lady, I have heard,” answered the king ; “ but, without this declaration of your own, should have felt compunction to bring the subject forward to the world ; I, however, rejoice to find you inclined to do justice, and make restitution.”

“ My lord, restitution is impossible ; I have been the bane of my son’s life, and never more dare I meet his eye : I first deprived him of his birth-right ; next of the woman on whom he had fixed his affection ; but there his good-spirit predominated ; for I bereft him of a fiend, and he found an angel. Next by the persecutions he endured : in the heat of youth, he forgot himself in the presence of your father, and incurred banishment, involving his friends in the same disgrace ; from which the conduct of his son hath alone rescued him. Can such deeds, my lord, be forgiven ? if they

they can, 'tis not by mortal, but by heavenly spirits."

"Monteith is noble, lady; and noble minds bear not enmity with true repentance."

"Oh, my liege, you know not half; insulted, deprived of what his uncle Monteith left him, his property plundered, his person seized by a false pretence sailing among the islands, and detained a considerable time a prisoner at the castle of the Countess of Roskelyn; but Heaven prevented the stroke that must have plunged us for ever past hope! his life was spared; and I see him surrounded by children, at once beautiful and brave; while my second son hath only a daughter, whose name will be lost in marriage."

The king, though young, readily furnished the pride of family, as well as repentance, to have no small share in the countess's

countess's avowal. — " Lady," said he, " depend justice shall be done. Monteith departs with his friends and his men to-morrow : at Edinburgh he proposes to rest a few days ; and there, if you please, we will confer farther on this business. I answer for his respect to you, and pray your presence. Some means may be used to render all easy : the Lady Matilda, for example, wedded to my friend Randolph ; what think you of that ? though cousins, the consent of the church might be obtained."

" I think of it, my liege, as a proposal from Heaven ; and, could it be brought to a happy issue, should regard you as the blessed agent."

" I will use my endeavour.—Retire, lady, compose your spirits ; 'tis never too late to act well. Three days hence, fail not to meet us at Edinburgh ; I pledge myself for the consequence."

" Blessings

“ Blessings and peace rest upon your highness ; I obey.” So saying, she made her obeisance, and left the king’s presence.

THE king, with a prudence beyond his years, made no mention to Monteith, or to any one, of what had passed ; but, arriving at the city, resolved to discuss the business without loss of time.

The Lady Ambrosine accompanied her husband to Edinburgh ; where they were to separate, she to return to the castle of Monteith, with Phillippa and the young St. Clair ; James being to accompany his father.

On the second evening after their arrival at the city, the Lord and Lady Roskelyn, the Lady Matilda, the dowager, Monteith, Ambrosine, Randolph, and Phillippa, received a summons to attend the sovereign without failure in
the

the evening. These orders were unknown to the separate families, and the purport unsuspected by all but the dowager, who, though she shuddered at the meeting, was firm to her purpose.

All attended but the Lady Roskelyn, the conflict of whose mind had brought on a fever; and nothing less than the king's especial command could have obliged the dutiful Matilda to leave her. Monteith and his family first arrived; and found the king and chancellor, with three of the first law lords; but, for the moment, they entered into no explanation. Next came the dowager, in the mourning weeds she had assumed; and which caused great surprise to the family of St. Clair. They remarked that the king received her with distinguished kindness, and were not without fear that her arts were again to be employed to their annoyance.

Laft

Last came the Lord of Roskelyn and his daughter. The first started on seeing the party ; but, collecting his spirits, he advanced and apologized for the countess, by pleading her illness.

A silence unpleasant to all succeeded ; and which was first broken by the king.

“ My noble friends,” said he, “ I have a business to discuss this night, which needs no hearers but those immediately concerned, and the opinions of a few men most conversant in the laws of the country. My respect for the house of Roskelyn is great, and my obligations to Monteith and his son Randolph are also great. If possible, I will hold the scale impartially between ye. The dowager of Roskelyn here, impelled by age and repentance, wishes, ere she dies, to do an act of justice ; and, for that purpose, comes forward to declare the truth ; and will here swear, in the presence

presence of the Holy Virgin and angels, that St. Clair, commonly called Monteith, is her eldest born son by the late Earl of Roskelyn; but, from motives of shame, his birth concealed from the world. A mother's oath is strong; and, if I mistake not, there be other, though weaker testimonies of this truth, as I have heretofore heard.—Speak, Lady Roskelyn, and deny or confirm my words.”

“Your words are most true, my liege. St Clair is my eldest son, and, by the laws of my country, the lawful heir of Roskelyn. On this I am ready to take the holy sacrament, should I die the hour following.”

Lord Roskelyn appeared struck beyond the power of speech: but Monteith, advancing forward, said:—“My gracious lord, I grieve that you have been troubled with a business which I
never

never more can engage in. That I am the son of the late Earl of Roskelyn I have no doubt ; but the generous chief Monteith, Heaven directed, snatched me from obscurity, and, my story known, gave me a name, above all others dear to my heart, and so honoured, that with life I will only forego it. What the claims of nature and birth denied, the bounty of my uncle, and, I pride to say, the affection of the heirefs of Kintail, bestowed. I am rich, my liege, rich to the extent of my wishes. I have an ample domain at Monteith, and one yet more extensive at Kintail ; I have vassals who would die for their chief ; but, above all, I have a wife, my lord, and children, beyond all price : What could man wish for more ? No, let the Lord of Roskelyn keep his title and his wealth ; if I am satisfied, the world hath no right to interfere with our arrangements.

For myself and children, I for ever disclaim all right to the estate and name of Roskelyn; and will by law sign an irrevocable deed to that purpose. The Lord of Roskelyn may yet have a son, the pride of his grey hairs, and whom *I* shall glory to acknowledge."

"Never, never," exclaimed Roskelyn, sinking on his knee. "Generous St. Clair, I dare not say brother, your conduct overpowers me: take, take your right; henceforward, all I ask is obscurity."

Monteith raised him to his embrace: "Brother," repeated he, "let all past be forgotten."

The dowager, oppressed with the scene almost to fainting, said, with a faltering voice,—“St. Clair, my son, let me not die without your forgiveness!”

Monteith turned towards her: “Lady,”

replied he, “ I joy to say I have a mother.”

“ Truly did the king say thou wert noble,” answered she. “ In this the first embrace and blessing I give thee, what a weight of sin appears lifted from my soul. Bring me thy wife, thy children ; oh, how have I longed to claim kindred with them !”

The Lady Ambrosine bent her knee ; as did Randolph, James, and Phillippa. The dowager embraced all with transport : “ Neglected branches of a noble tree,” said she, “ long may ye flourish, and transmit to posterity a name disgraced only by my failure ! Yet, though ye have bloomed in the desert, the careful hand of culture hath not been wanting ; and the lessons of Barra will not be forgotten in the halls of your fathers. Yet say, St. Clair ;—here, in the king’s presence, I claim a promise ;—though

you reject for yourself the name and lands of Roskelyn, yet, should my son John die without male issue, that you will suffer them to be received and held by the lawful heir; for so well have I seen in Randolph the duty of your children, that never, I judge, without your consent will they accept it."

"I repeat," replied St. Clair, "that, for myself and children, I disclaim it for ever; but more of this hereafter: the time presses, and family concerns become secondary to the public welfare."

"On the return from the campaign," said the king, "all may be rendered easy. For example, an union of the families would, I think, be most desirable. What say you, Lord Roskelyn, and you, my brave friend?"

"I will be guided by your highness," answered Lord Roskelyn.

"My

“ My liege,” said Monteith, “ in the idleness of peace, it will be soon enough to talk of these matters. Put not love into my boys’ heads, I pray you ; it will drive out valour.”

“ We will defer it, then,” returned the king, smiling. “ Come, Lady Roskelyn, resume your wonted spirits ; all, I am convinced, will go to your wishes. There is no shame in having given birth to a brave man.”

“ Your grace’s notice honours me,” answered she. “ This duty done, I have no farther business with the world, and will away to a convent.”

“ Not so, dear mother,” replied Ambrosine, taking her hand ; “ you owe us a long debt of love, and we owe you a long debt of duty and affection. I pray ye let us strike a balance. The house of your honoured father cannot be hateful to you ; accompany us to

Monteith : in playing the hostess to so respected a guest, I shall be beguiled of half my sorrow, and the cares of my children will divert yours."

" Ambrosine," replied the dowager, " may I say, daughter ? receive my thanks ; but your kindness stings me to the heart : Is it possible you can forget —— ?"

" I forget every thing but the present happiness," interrupted she, " and which will be incomplete if you refuse my request. Monteith will join in the entreaty ; and, if he fails, I will claim the interest of our kind sovereign himself."

" You have it, sweet lady," replied the king ; " your eyes and words bear a power not to be resisted ; and the dowager must perforce comply."

" I pray ye, good mother," said Monteith, " become acquainted with my family ;

family ; I will wager my life that, on my return, I shall find you satisfied with them."

" I doubt it not ; but their kindness will but add fresh pangs to my heart. I will however go, if *you* indeed wish it."

" I do from my soul," replied he, respectfully raising her hand to his lips ; " Ambrosine possesses a witching power, and will beguile unpleasant remembrances ; for at Barra, after her arrival, the days passed with me as swiftly as hours, and the years as days."

" In truth," said the king, " you will make us young men mad to be wedded, if, after so long an union, the fascination still remains."

" May your grace be as happy as myself in a wife !" replied Monteith.—" But come," added he, to the Lord of Roskelyn, " my brother here looks sad, and there is no occasion for grief."

“ Sweet maid,” said Ambrosine, advancing with Phillippa to the Lady Matilda, “ my daughter and you must be acquainted ; will you not acknowledge your new relations ? ”

Matilda, though pale and agitated on account of her father, pressed Ambrosine’s hand to her lips.—“ Lady,” said she, “ if I may, I will love you dearly ; my heart bounded when I saw you first, though our consanguinity was then unknown to me.”

Phillippa, with affection, saluted her cousin : and, an entire reconciliation effected, the king arose, saying,—“ By my life, would men act uprightly, the law would be the poorest of all professions ; for see, if we have not, without judge or clerk, concluded a business that might have employed all the lawyers of Scotland until it had transposed

posed the property of both parties into their own pockets."

All then took leave of the sovereign, and retired to their respective habitations.

C H A P. VIII.

MONTEITH, on his return home with his family, found his friends assembled : they were greatly astonished at the recital of what had passed, and expressed their entire approbation of the conduct of the chief. Randolph, being engaged with Ronaldsa in their professional duties, and the young people with their mother, they entered fully into the future arrangements respecting that youth. —“ This campaign over,” said Monteith, “ in which, I trust, he will distinguish himself, he shall be truly informed of his birth. As my son, I shall ever regard him ; and rejoice that, by the reconciliation of to-night, his future duty will

will not keep us strangers ; unless, indeed, his father should be so exasperated at the trick played him, as to break our new-made friendship."

" Of that," replied De Bourg, " there is little danger ; his own interest, and the satisfaction of being father to so noble a youth, will obliterate all other considerations."

" With his father, I think, they will ; but, for his mother, I know not."

" Why, in faith," said Ross, " in her case, I can form no judgment : his visit to her castle, and his liberation of you, are awkward circumstances to overcome ; for she may suppose him better informed than he really is."

" At all events," observed Hamilton, " he hath seen her real disposition, and will be guarded against her arts."

" He will," answered M^rGregor ; " but now to another subject. De

Bourg and I have this day, for want of other employment, rode to Inveresk, and, with the curiosity of old women, inquired into the story told us by Donald M'Kenzie."

"And ye returned with old woman's payment," said Monteith; "your labour for your pains."

"Not so," replied he: "strange as it may appear, the prediction is inserted in the church book, the year before our banishment to Barra, and the names of the men who witnessed it signed thereunto. The old friar who inserted it hath been dead twelve years; and, on farther inquiry, the seer of Roskelyn Glen, we learned, had been deceased near twenty. For farther satisfaction, I copied the words from the book."

Monteith read and returned the writing. — "If we believe in prophetic dreams," said he, "this augurs well;
for

for my part, I trust only to a good cause, a strong arm, and a sharp sword."

"You now," said M'Gregor, "begin to find the advantage of having had Randolph in your possession: could the dowager have conceived there was an heir to Roskelyn alive, she had never made this avowal."

"I should suppose not," replied he; but let us be satisfied that she hath at length done justice, without examining the matter too closely."

"Thou art right," said De Bourg: "for my part, so sincere is my forgiveness, that, if I survive her, I shall not hesitate, at my own proper charge, to have a mass said for her soul!"

"If scarcity enhances value, thy prayers must be above all price," replied Ross: "prithee, when went thou to shrift?"

"Marry,

“ Marry, not longer ago than thyself ; canst thou particularize the time ? ”

“ In faith, no ; the accounts will therefore be long, and the priest need pray for patience.”

“ Pish, man ; to hear thee, but not to hear me ; I shall comprise all in a few words : ‘ Father,’ I shall say, ‘ I have a bad memory, and one sin hath driven another out of my mind. Tell me, I pray ye, who is *your* patron saint ? ’ — ‘ St. Ursula, son,’ he may reply : ‘ but why do you ask ? ’ — ‘ St. Ursula, holy virgin ! she hath also been my chosen patroness from my infancy, and — — ”

“ Now, marry,” interrupted Monteith, “ thou hast forgotten St. Bridget ; dost thou turn apostate, and deny her ? ”

“ No, in faith ; but human knowledge is failable, and the best may sometimes waver. — Now, I pray ye, leave the priest, the saint, and me, to ourselves. —

‘ Dear

‘Dear father,’ I shall continue, ‘that holy virgin who could cut off her nose and lips to preserve her chastity ——’

“Is not a virgin for thy purpose, nor for thy priest’s neither, I will be sworn,” said M’Gregor; “but go on.”

“’Tis impossible, if you thus break on the confession; such impiety merits the inquisition.—Where was I?”

“Thou wert attacking the chastity of St. Ursula,” replied Ross.

“Well, then, to proceed.—‘Father, I pray ye, purchase for the holy maid, in my name, a necklace, a golden buckle for her waist, or a comb for her hair; and entreat her interest for me.’”

“Thou hadst better have bought her a new nose and upper lip,” said Hamilton; “these would have embellished her more than jewels: but, prithee, let us have the priest’s answer.”

“Why,

“ Why, the priest answers like a man of sense, and one who feels for the infirmities of others :—‘ Son,’ will he reply, poising my purse, ‘ thy penitence ought not to favour of lightness ; for thy sins are heavy. A bad memory is not, however, a crime, but a misfortune. I charge thee take heed in future, or it will cost thee a more weighty penance to obtain favour of my patroness.’—Thus ends my confession, and my conscience is left as clear ——”

“ As that of thy confessor,” interrupted Monteith ; “ so let them rest together.—Now to business ; are ye all prepared to depart ?”

All replied in the affirmative ; and they were soon after joined by Ambrosine, who, in spite of her outward calmness, felt some severe internal pangs at the approaching separation.

While

While all were thus engaged, Randolph had returned, and, meeting Philippa alone, entered into conversation with her.—“ If this be the happiness I promised myself from the repeal of my father’s banishment,” said she, “ I would to Heaven we were all safe again in the isle of Barra. My mother, in spite of her apparent unconcern, I am convinced, trembles for my father; and, should he fall, will never survive it; in which case, we shall be doubly orphans: I, alas! at one blow, may lose parents, brothers, all!—”

“ What a direful catastrophe hast thou supposed, Philippa! I trust we shall return safe, and, round our winter’s fire, laugh at thy fears, sweet sister.”

“ No; for, if thou dost, thou wilt be estranged from us; thou art to wed our newly acknowledged cousin.”

“ I know

“ I know not what power on earth can estrange me from a home so dear: but who said so, I pray thee? ”

“ Did not the king speak of an union between the two families? ”

“ True; but more consents are necessary than the king’s to unite them: why should the chance fall upon me; have I not brothers? ”

“ But thou art the eldest. ”

“ The Lady Matilda and I shall never be nearer related, though I confess her fair to admiration; neither, perhaps, would she be willing. ”

“ Poor thing! she, perhaps, would scarcely be consulted; her father agreed at once; and I saw pleasure sparkle at the proposal in the eyes of the dowager. I love not such ways of trafficking for the affections of women; in truth, ’tis treating them like cattle, or old garments. ”

“ Thou

“ Thou canst not say so in thine own case, Phillippa; for, if respectful love may win a heart, Ronaldsa in time must win thine.”

“ Why didst thou name him, when thou knowest I love not to hear of him?”

“ Hast thou seen any one since thou left Barra that thou couldst love better?”

“ No; all strange men are equal to me: in the dear circle at the island all my affections are centered; and I fear I never again shall see such happy hours. In fine weather, our morning entertainment on the water; our afternoon walks; and our evening’s music, when thy voice mingled with mine; I had not a wish unsatisfied.—Dost thou not regret them, Randolph?”

The question brought remembrances to the heart of Randolph, that overwhelmed it with affection and softness.—

“ Dear sister,” replied he, “ they were indeed

indeed happy hours ; but we were then children, and other pursuits now demand our attention."

" Ay, thine and my father's ; and now poor James hath caught this hateful rage for war : I would the saints would inspire the hearts of all men with more love to each other, that the cruel effusion of blood might be spared !"

CHAP. IX.

WHILE all was peace and affection in the dwelling of Monteith, Roskelyn, with a still agitated mind, took the way to his castle. Though his wife, by her violence, he had no doubt, had forced the dowager to this discovery, yet he was convinced her rage would be beyond all bounds; and, accustomed to yield to the storm, he already trembled at its approach; while Matilda rode by his side in silence, and was not divested of the same fears.

On reaching the castle, they were informed that the countess requested their presence.—Curious to learn the purport of the extraordinary summons which
they

they had received, she had risen, and, though confined to her chamber, waited their return with impatience. Concealment was impossible; and though, in fact, Roskelyn was less guilty than either his wife or mother, he felt as though himself was the greatest culprit.

The tale revealed, though in the most gentle terms, had all the effect he expected; malice and despair sat on the brow of the countess, while she gnashed her teeth with anguish, and with impotent rage tore her hair. To this paroxysm succeeded a torrent of words, levelled at once at her lord and his mother.—“The chaste matron,” said she, “the daughter and the sister of the chiefs of the house of Monteith, hath then avowed her infamy! she who could forget every feeling of a mother,—she who assisted by base arts to entrap me into a marriage with her youngest son, while the eldest sued at
my

my feet ! Fool, fool that I was, the deserved requital has fallen upon me !”

“ Dear mother,” said Matilda, though she trembled as she spoke, “ do not agitate yourself thus ; neither your fortune nor your name will suffer by this discovery ; my uncle hath disclaimed both.”

“ Thy uncle ! ha ! ha ! ha ! say that word again, and I strike thee at my feet : come, girl, for once be dutiful, and curse them ; thou evaded it at Stirling.”

“ Indeed I cannot, you terrify me to death ; for the love of Heaven, take patience.”

Lady Roskelyn raised her hand to strike ; when her lord, who had stood in silent observation of her phrenzy, put his daughter aside.—“ Retire, Matilda,” said he ; “ this is no scene for a young maid ;—should we need your presence, we will send for you.”

“ She

“She shall not go,” screamed the countess; “at her peril let her stir.” As she spoke, she endeavoured to pass her lord; but, restraining her, he said,—“Ellen, your conduct, though late, hath awakened manhood in my soul. I am master here.—Go, Matilda, and presume not to return till I command.”

Matilda tremblingly obeyed; and the Lady Roskelyn for a moment gave way to silent astonishment, at a conduct so unusual; but rage again overflowing, she said,—“Thou master here; thou, John of Roskelyn; thou, poor dependent on thy brother’s bounty! Didst thou possess the spirit of a man, thou wouldst have dashed the insolent offer back in his throat;—but thou fearest him.”

“Not half so much as I fear thee; vindictive woman, bane of my happiness;

ness; thy tyrant reign is past; I throw the slavery off for ever; command is mine, thy part obedience."

"Obedience to thee, never! go thou, ere thou talkest of command, and take lessons of the brave, the unparalleled Monteith; and, when thou resemblest him, thou shalt meet obedience."

"Thou counselest well; I mean it: his example to-day hath given vigour to my heart. And, in return, do thou observe the gentle, the unassuming Ambrosine, whose sweet spirit hath preserved in her countenance all the charms of her youth; copy her closely; see her smiles on her husband, the affection with which she looks on her children: imitate these, I say, Ellen, and thou shalt deserve a tenderness which hitherto hath been misplaced."

In all the discourse that had passed, no word appeared to wound so deeply as

allusion to Ambrosine : passion rendered her speechless ; for, though her lips opened, no sound escaped them : her face suddenly became black, her eyes projected, and the blood issued in a torrent from her mouth.

Alarmed, the Lord Roskelyn called immediate assistance, and retired, unable to bear so dreadful a spectacle ; for it was plain her violence had broken a blood vessel. His mind wounded by the scene he had undergone before the king, he was not in his usual frame of temper to bear her upbraidings ; but he exerted himself too late ; for custom and indulgence had nurtured her vices till they were incorrigible.

That she had never loved him, was too plain to be overlooked even by himself ; but the reflexion had been mitigated until the two last disputes, by the supposition that she had entertained no
other

other partiality ; much less did he suspect for St. Clair, of whom she had ever spoken with rancour and vehemence. Her conduct too, contrasted with that of the wife of Monteith, also conspired to make him feel her tyranny.

Though moved by her situation, he kept from her chamber ; but he made perpetual inquiries respecting her health ; and on the ensuing morning, hearing she was better, ordered Matilda to attend him in the hall. His looks shewed his mind was ill at ease ; but, preventing her from expressing her thoughts on his account,—“ My child,” said he, “ for a while I leave Roskelyn ; every active man in the kingdom must wish to do his part to expel the common enemy ; and it becomes me not to be exempt from my share of the danger. I mean to collect my vassals, and away to the borders. In the mean time, bestow every care on

your mother ; but if she forgets herself, as heretofore, I charge you on my blessing to hasten away to the dowager, be where she will : I have this night written to her to that purpose ; she will receive and protect you. Lest from a false tenderness, you neglect to obey this injunction, I have ordered two of my most trusty vassals to observe all that passes ; so that I shall not be easily deceived, and you will meet my anger if I am not obeyed."

Matilda sunk at her father's feet.—
 " Oh my lord, I conjure you," cried she, " rush not into these horrid encounters ; if there be no stronger tie, for the sake of your child. My mother will be sorry for her violence, now the paroxysm is past ; I pray ye go to her."

" No, Matilda ; my presence would rather retard than forward her recovery. She wished me to copy Monteith ; and
 that

that request I will endeavour to fulfil. Monteith, blessed with an angel wife, and children good and tender as thee, my daughter, yet leaves all in the common cause. I have no tie but thee; and, should I fall, this night have I, by a testament, secured thy future fortune."

Never had Matilda seen her father so resolved; and, unable to reply, she answered him only with her tears.

"The man who could refuse the just claim he hath on the domain of Roskelyn, is truly noble, Matilda, and prejudice sinks before such conduct: he is thy guardian; or, if he falls, his wife. Thy welfare is now my only concern."

Matilda again attempted to persuade her father to see the countess; but in vain; and, tenderly embracing her, he dismissed her to her chamber.

Arranging all for the interval of his absence, he collected his vassals in haste; and with two hundred men, three days after, left Roskelyn, to join the party who had preceded him.

AT the appointed day, Monteith and his friends left the city, and travelled towards the borders. Previous to their departure, the chief, with Randolph and James, went to bid the dowager farewell; a token of duty she was far from expecting, and which gave her great satisfaction. At the request of Ambrosine, she promised to pass the interval of their absence at the castle of Monteith; and presenting her son with some rich jewels, with tears and blessings, bade him and her grandsons farewell.

At the separation, Ambrosine, as usual, betrayed no sign of discomposure; she
pressed

pressed her husband, Randolph, and James, alternately in her arms.—“Heaven guard and speed you,” said she; “a short time, I trust, and we shall meet in peace and happiness. The term of your absence will be painful; but your return will obliterate the remembrance.”

Having previously taken leave of the king, she departed the same day that her husband left the city, for the castle of Monteith, with Phillippa and St. Clair. She found Jean and her mother already arrived; the latter, by the bounty of Randolph, much recovered.

Bidding them welcome with her usual kindness, she appropriated an apartment for the elder; and entertained Jean among her own waiting women, a situation the maid accepted with the utmost joy. The story, which the Lady Ambrosine had learned from Randolph, of the handkerchief, she treated lightly, telling

both the mother and daughter that, though at the period the delivery of the lady was a secret, the child had since been acknowledged, and all mystery long ceased respecting him.

Some days after the dowager, according to her promise, arrived; and though, at first, the remembrance of her former conduct oppressed her, yet the care and attention of Ambrosine lessened it daily; and, treated with a respect she had never been accustomed to from the Lady Roskelyn, she felt increased satisfaction at the recital she had made. Phillippa soon bore an equal share with Matilda in her affection: and for her brother, considering him as the youngest of *three* sons, she declared she took his fortunes upon herself, and would pay to the young St. Clair, as far as in her power, the debt she owed to his father.

Among

Among those that rejoiced at the change that had taken place, none felt greater satisfaction than father Thomas : he not only congratulated the parties at the castle, but for several days, with his brethren, held solemn thanksgivings in the chapel.

THE Countess of Roskelyn, though unable to leave her chamber, was somewhat recovered. The intelligence of her husband joining the army, filled her with astonishment, as did also his quitting the castle without bidding her farewell : she plainly saw her passion had carried her too far ; but, depending on his former weakness, had no doubt of subduing his anger on his return. She also heard, with an acrimony that had nearly renewed her disorder, that the dowager was at Monteith : and sinking from the phrenzy of passion into that malignant state of

envy which preys upon the heart, she shunned all company, even that of her daughter; and, yielding to the envenomed canker that consumed her vitals, her body became thin and bent, her skin yellow and shrivelled, and her fine eyes sunken. The change in her person did not escape herself; it added to her other torments, and daily encreased the evil that she wished to surmount.

CHAP. X.

THE party of Monteith and his friends had reached the shire of Dumfries, when, to their great astonishment, they were joined by the Lord Roskelyn; who asked to be admitted of their party with an open freedom that gained him a ready welcome: after which they proceeded to join the main army, commanded by George Douglas Earl of Ormond, and Wallace of Craigie. The English, in the mean time, had passed the Solway Frith, and ravaged that part of the country; but, hearing of the approach of the Scottish army, called in their marauding parties, and fixed their camp on the banks of the river Sark. Their ad-

vanced guard was commanded by Magnus, an experienced warrior, who had been trained to arms in the French wars, and who, from the colour and bushiness of his beard, was called in derision, by the Scots, *Magnus with the red mane!* He was a foldier of fortune, and demanded no other reward for his services from the English court, than that he should enjoy all he could conquer in Scotland. The centre of the English army was commanded by the Earl of Northumberland; and the rear by Sir John Pennington.

The Scots were likewise in three divisions: the right wing was commanded by Wallace; the centre by the Earl of Ormond; and the left wing by the Lords Maxwell and Johnstone.

The party of Monteith and his friends were also separated; that of the chief, with Randolph, James, and Roskelyn;
with

with their men, into the right wing ; those of Ross and M'Gregor into the centre ; and those of Hamilton, with De Bourg and Ronaldsa, into the left division.

A decisive battle was resolved on by both parties, and all was prepared on each side. The Earl of Ormond harangued the troops, and fired them with resentment against the English, whom he accused of treachery and want of faith, in constantly breaking the truce made with the Scots.

Previous to the encounter, Monteith gave some general directions to Randolph and James ; to the first of whom he entrusted the command of an hundred of his picked men ; and for the last, in this his first onset, he ordered him to keep near himself.—“ Randolph, my brave lad,” said he, embracing him, “ my heart whispers me, that thou wilt
this

this day distinguish thyself in a manner I shall exult to see; but remember, prudence is as necessary to a soldier as valour. In the battle, think not of me; for, though disuse may have rusted my arms, the fervor of former years shall this day wipe off the spots. The only one I fear for is the Lord of Roskelyn; he is not used to these contests: the late vexation he hath endured may make him regardless of life: should it so happen that you be near him, disregard him not."

The signal for battle given, the right wing, commanded by Wallace, rushed forward upon the enemy; but were received with so dreadful a discharge from the English archers, that their impetuosity must have been checked, had not their leader called on them to trust to their swords and spears, and follow him. Monteith and his comrades seconded his example. — "Come on, my brave friends,"

friends," exclaimed he to his men, " my word hath ever hitherto been, *Victory or death!* and I will not now retract it. These English fight well at a distance ; we will try their mettle nearer." So saying, the whole party rushed upon the advanced guard, commanded by Magnus ; and a most fearful slaughter ensued on both sides, as each fought with the greatest animosity. Wallace performed prodigies of valour ; nor was Monteith inferior to him in skill or courage ; they spread desolation around, and were foremost in the road of death. In the confusion, the Lord of Roskelyn was wounded, beaten down, and had been slain but for Monteith, who, seeing his danger, rushed forward, and, with his broad sword, struck off the arm raised against him ; then, giving him in charge to a party of his men, he cried hastily, — " Bear off the Lord of Roskelyn to the

the camp ; he is wounded, but, I hope, not to death. Comfort, comfort, good brother, this battle over, I trust to bring you tidings that will heal your wounds. — Come on, my brave fellows, follow me.”

Again Monteith entered into the thickest of the fight, and saw, with exultation, his boys, as he called them, nobly performing their duty. Passing Randolph, he observed that his helmet was lost, and his head uncovered ; but that, regardless of that circumstance, he pursued his way with undaunted valour, his quick eye singling out the boldest victims, and eager in the pursuit of glory. In the heat of the fight he encountered Magnus ; wedged on either side with their separate parties, neither gave place. Magnus raised his sword, which fell on the shield of Randolph with a clattering sound ; at the same time saying, — “ Give
3. way,

way, boy ; cross not the paths of men, or thus I annihilate thee !"—Monteith saw, and, perhaps for the first time, trembled at danger ; he spurred forward to assist his adopted son ; but, ere he could reach him, the combat had attained its utmost height. At that moment, even the ardour of battle, combined with an affection strong in the bosom of St. Clair as that he felt for his own children, gave way, and he gazed without interference, fearful of lessening the glory of Randolph. The blows of Magnus were heavy ; but, undaunted, the youth redoubled his activity ; and each darting forward at once with their spears, the horses of both were slain, and their weapons broken.—“ Oh that the battle hung on this onset,” cried Magnus ; “ ’tis a brave boy, and I could grieve to slay him.—Give way, noble lad ; thou shalt, by my faith, obtain
honourable

honourable terms." Magnus, as he spoke, bent forward, as, for a moment, did Randolph, to recover breath; but the next, attacking him with his sword, he replied,—“ I mean it, valiant Magnus; come on, thou or I must yield; either thou shalt conquer *the boy*, or the boy conquer *the man*.”

The conflict on foot was terrible; every blow appeared the final stroke: the harness which defended the right arm of Randolph was broken, as was that of Magnus, in various places. In vain the veteran strove, by a well aimed blow, to end the conflict; Randolph, accustomed even from infancy to the science of manly defence, parried his utmost skill, until at length, by a decisive stroke, he laid his experienced and valiant enemy at his feet.

The cries of both parties rent the air; that of Magnus with despair, that of the
Scots.

Scots with triumph. The youth Randolph was naked to the shoulder, and the mark which nature gave was mistaken for blood.—“Ruin, ruin,” cried the followers of the English leader, “our valiant commander is fallen; hope is lost: away, away.” The Scots, elated by the fall of so formidable an opponent, on their part, exclaimed,—“Victory! victory! the *red mane* is fallen! the *bloody arm* triumphs! and Scotland shall be free from the tyrant yoke of England!”

“Bear your leader from the field,” cried Randolph; “accursed be he who makes so noble a warrior prisoner. Bear him away, I say; nay, gently, did I love my country less, I could weep at this victory!”

Randolph turned from the fallen hero; and, twisting his plaid round his arm, again rushed into the battle, which had
now

now become universal, and, for a time, was obstinately contested on both sides; but finally ended by the party of Sir John Pennington being routed. The centre, commanded by the Earl of Northumberland, shared the same fate. Sir John Pennington was taken prisoner, as was also the Lord Percy, in endeavouring to forward his father's escape, together with Sir Robert Harrington, and others.

The English, discomfited by the loss of their leaders, fled toward the Solway; where, the river being swelled by the tide, numbers were drowned; their loss, from the event of this battle, consisting of three thousand men, with the greatest booty that had ever fallen into the hands of the Scots, since the battle of Bannockburn.

On the part of the Scots, the loss was six hundred, but no one of note fell,
except

except the valiant Wallace, who died three months after of the wounds he received in the battle.

The conflict over, mutual congratulations took place; but none shared a greater degree of glory than Monteith and his friends, several of whom were wounded, but slightly; and, a time given for repose, they resolved to leave the borders, where all was quiet, and had every appearance of remaining so.

The conquest of Magnus, who died as his men were removing him from the field, had given a glory to Randolph, which enrolled his name amongst those of the most distinguished warriors; and Monteith exulted in the idea of the glorious revenge he should take of his heretofore enemies, by presenting them with so honourable an heir.

The Lord of Roskelyn, whose wound was severe, was near a month before he
could

could be removed; during which interval Monteith, with an affection that covered his brother with shame, declined returning to the city. His comrades also remained with him; for, in a private conference, they had agreed that, should the Lord of Roskelyn's wound take an unfavourable turn, he should not die without the satisfaction of knowing and acknowledging his son; an information they otherwise meant to delay till the family was more fully assembled. To their wishes, at the end of three weeks he was convalescent; and they prepared to depart; but, on the evening before, finding himself alone with St. Clair, he thus addressed him:

“ It is with confusion and shame I receive your attentions. One only step can reconcile me to myself: let me restore your domains, and take a younger brother's portion.”

“ Ros-

“ Roskelyn,” answered Monteith, “ we have both room for forgiveness. If, hereafter, I should need yours, do not withhold it.”

“ By my soul, I will not ; but you never injured me.”

“ You speak beyond your knowledge ; the conduct of my family might have provoked retaliation from a milder spirit than mine.”

“ In truth, it might,” replied Roskelyn warmly ; “ and my wife, I am now well assured, loved you : your long residence in her castle hath often staggered me ; but, if this my suspicion be true, it is a triumph unbecoming Monteith ; and, though I am sunk, yet you must hereafter answer it.”

“ Roskelyn,” returned Monteith calmly, “ I will answer it now. As to my confinement in the castle of the Valley, it is the only act I cannot sincerely forgive ;

forgive ; for the uncertainty of my fate had nearly plunged my wife in the grave : in which case, thy family and mine had been foes for ever. During my absence, she, my children, and friends, employed all my thoughts ; and, had the charms of all women been united in thy wife, they would have made no impression on my heart. I plainly tell thee, I saw her with hatred and abhorrence ; and, if thou doubtest my honour, will confirm my words by the most sacred oath thou canst require.”

“ Enough,” replied Roskelyn ; “ forgive me ; the action was indeed unpardonable, and, as she related it, her motives to me ambiguous : however, I thank Heaven, thou escaped safe from harm ; and, if it will not give thee too much vexation, oblige me with *thy* account of the transaction.”

Mon-

Monteith willingly complied ; and related his own capture by the Dane ; his being conveyed to the castle by M'Lellan ; and, finally, his delivery through the means of young Randolph : he, however, carefully avoided all that might awaken the jealousy of Roskelyn, or taint the chastity of his wife's conduct.

Roskelyn heard him with astonishment ; he had no idea of the plan having been so deeply laid, and protested ignorance of the whole till after Monteith's escape.—“ I shudder to add,” said he, “ that I fear murder might have terminated this business, but for that noble lad Randolph. O Monteith, Heaven to thee hath been peculiarly gracious : what is banishment with such a wife and children ; kings might look down from their thrones on thee with envy !”

“ Thou sayest truly ; and so sensible am I of my happiness, that, even from the first hour I loved Ambrosine, never, even in fancy, have my thoughts strayed from her : and now, as when decked in all her virgin charms, is she, in my eyes, the fairest and best of women ; and should Heaven, the bare thought makes me a coward, snatch her first to itself, never shall my heart or arms be polluted with another love.”

“ Yet in youth, St. Clair,” said Roskelyn, “ thy heart was more susceptible ; for example, thou lovedst Ellen ; and for Randolph, by his age, he is not, I judge, the son of the heiress of Kintail.”

“ Pish, man, thou art no confessor ; yet I will thus far set thee right : I never truly loved till I knew Ambrosine ; for Randolph, I swear to thee his birth is right lawful, and he shall be *heir to my domains !*”

“ And

“ And nobly will he transmit your name to posterity,” answered Roskelyn.

“ The king’s offer of uniting our families pleases me well; what say you to it?”

“ We will unite them, if affection and occasion suit : but of this hereafter. I would that thy wife would suffer the Lady Matilda to be acquainted with Phillippa.”

“ She shall be so on our return,” answered Roskelyn ; “ I will no longer be the dastardly slave of that tyrannical woman’s caprices.”

At that moment, some of the friends entered ; and the conversation became general : and the Lord Roskelyn, a few days after, being able to sit his horse, they retook their way to the capital.

C H A P. XI.

THE interval of Monteith's absence had, at first, passed heavily with his family, whose affection made them feel severely for his safety; but the result of the battle of Sark dispersed their fears, and revived their hopes, as, by a messenger, he informed them that he should speedily return.

The bravery of Randolph was repeated to them by an hundred mouths, and highly applauded by all; so that the dowager felt daily fresh gratification from the avowal she had made. A report that the troops were on their return to the city, where they were to be disbanded, had reached them; and caused
the

the Lady Ambrosine to propose to the dowager a journey to Edinburgh, to meet and welcome their friends. This arrangement was agreed on ; and all departed for that purpose.

Three days after their arrival, they received the gladsome tidings that the troops were only at the distance of a few miles ; when the party resolved to meet them. The dowager and Ambrosine rode first ; and after them Phillippa and St. Clair, followed by the domestics ; and, to their great satisfaction, had not proceeded above four miles, when they discovered, from an height, the troops advancing in a hollow beneath. First marched the minstrels, playing martial music ; next came the various divisions under their respective commanders ; before each of whom was borne some trophy won in battle.

The keen eye of Randolph first discovered the party, and pointed it out to Monteith, saying,—“ I would wager my life, that yonder is my beloved mother and sister ; doubly precious are the comforts of home after these rude encounters, and trebly dear the sweet inmates of domestic life !”

Monteith acquiesced in Randolph’s opinion, that it was his family that approached ; and, spurring their beasts, they speedily reached them.

Monteith and Randolph both leaped from their horses ; when Ambrosine throwing herself from her saddle into her husband’s arms, she cried,—“ Welcome ! welcome !” being all that joy had left her the power to articulate. Randolph instinctively flew to Phillippa ; who clasped his neck, breathless and almost senseless with pleasure.—“ My generous Ambrosine,” exclaimed Monteith,

teith, " this is indeed a joyful surprise ; but thus it is that you ever outstrip my wishes."

" Welcome ! most welcome !" repeated she, grasping her husband's hand, and tears, in spite of her utmost efforts, flowing from her eyes, " may this be the last time we ever separate ! But joy hath rendered us both ungrateful : see, the dowager hath honoured us so far as to accompany me in this meeting."

" Lady," said Monteith, turning to his mother, " this is a favour so unexpected, that you must pardon my unwilling neglect ; for, in truth, I did not see you. Suffer me," said he, lifting her from her horse, " to thank you for a condescension that does me so much honour."

" St. Clair," replied she, embracing him, " could more blessings be heaped upon thee, I would pray for them ; but,

my son, thy happiness I think as complete as possible for that of man. For me, too, the attentions of thy wife and children appear to have renovated my youth, and led me into the true road to peace ; for thy house is Heaven, and thy wife the ministering spirit !”

“ Lady,” replied St. Clair gaily, “ did I not tell you it would be thus ? The Circe hath laid her spells on you, and never will she loose the charm she hath spread over your senses.”

“ I trust she will not,” replied the dowager ; “ for ’tis the sweetest charm my heart ever felt.”

“ Heaven then continue it,” answered Monteith, joining the hands of his wife and the dowager ; “ we owe each other, good mother, a long debt of affection ; may the lives of both be spared till it be paid.”

The

The dowager was moved even to tears: —“ My son,” said she, “ how have I abused you ; an hundred years of kindness could not expiate my conduct !”

“ It is expiated, dear lady ; those who have always had a good mother cannot so truly appreciate, as I do, the value of that tender relative.—Nay, Phillippa, dost thou not welcome me ? Beware of Randolph, I charge thee ; he is a dangerous fellow, and must not be trifled with, as heretofore.”

“ A thousand, thousand times welcome,” said Phillippa ; repeatedly embracing her father ; “ oh what a happy moment is this ; methinks the happiest of my life !”

The young St. Clair then embraced his father ; when they were joined by Roskelyn, James Monteith, and the rest of their friends. The dowager was at once astonished and delighted to see the

friendship that apparently reigned between her sons; and, after embracing Roskelyn, they soon after remounted their horses, and joined the troops, which had halted for a short refreshment.

The first rapture of meeting past, they rode through the ranks; when the vassals of Kintail, elated at the sight of their generous mistress, surrounded her, clapping their hands, and expressing their satisfaction by repeated acclamations and blessing. Waving her hand to procure silence, she at length succeeded; when she thus addressed them: “ My good friends, my heart is too full at the present moment to thank you as I ought, for the brave support you have afforded my beloved husband in the battle of Sark; but, believe me, I feel it with gratitude, and trust to repay the obligation. The justice of our noble sovereign hath revoked
I the

the sentence that confined us to Barrâ ; and, I hope, we shall henceforwards be better neighbours at the castle of Kintail, where we purpose to spend a part of our time, and where I shall not only be always glad to see my friends, but also to remove any pecuniary difficulty they may labour under from sickness or other unavoidable distress. For such brave men as have fallen in this conflict, and which I joy to hear are few, their wives and children devolve to me, and to my utmost will I supply the loss they have sustained. As the troops will, I hear, be speedily disbanded, I conclude by wishing you all to hasten home ; for I judge by myself how welcome the sight of husbands and sons must be after such an absence."

Acclamations and praises again rent the air. To Ambrosine they afforded no triumph : but the proud heart of the

H 6

dowager

dowager exulted, as she passed through the ranks, to hear the encomiums passed on her as the parent of Monteith.—
 “ ’Tis the dowager of Roskelyn! our chief’s mother!” said the men of Monteith; “ in faith, he inherits her lofty port; his eyes and brows too are the same. Happy lady, if you be a proud mother, who can wonder, when you have given to the world one of the noblest of men!”

The dowager, moved at once by the example of Ambrosine and by the words of the vassals, replied,—“ I thank ye all; the same the heiress of Kintail hath promised to her vassals, accept from me; I owe that duty to my father’s house, and to the affliction I bear my son.”

Again the plaudits echoed through the troops, which when somewhat subsided, St. Clair, addressing his men, said:
 “ My mother hath been beforehand
 with

with me in the duty I proposed to take on myself; but I rejoice at it, as I leave you in abler and better hands than mine, with one who will shew you, that she truly shares the blood of her noble father and ever honoured brother. I rejoice also, as it leaves me more ample means to testify my gratitude to my long tried and faithful associates, the brave islanders, to whom I owe obligations which never can be repaid; and which, when I forget, may Heaven forsake me!"

The islanders were not more backward in testifying their acknowledgments than their comrades had been: and, the first effusion somewhat subsided, Roskelyn and the other chiefs followed the example set by the family of Monteith, promising friendship to their men, and provision to the wives and children of those who had fallen in battle.

The

The scene of exultation passed, they proceeded to the city ; when the chiefs immediately waited on the king, who received them with the distinction their valour demanded.

The duty paid to the sovereign, the Lord Roskelyn took the way to his castle ; where he was received with satisfaction and filial duty by Matilda, who informed him with tears of the decline that consumed her mother ; and also that, giving way to a gloomy melancholy, she refused all company, and even sometimes for days obstinately declined to see her.

The Lord of Roskelyn had not so far forgotten his affection, to hear the account unmoved : he flew to his wife's apartment ; but started on observing the change that so short a time had made in her person ; and, testifying his sorrow

at

at her situation, entreated that all past animosities might be forgotten.

“ Ay, when I forget to live,” replied she ; “ the family of Monteith have empoisoned the air I breathe ; even buried in the solitude of my chamber, their accursed triumphs reach my ear. That vain-glorious lad too, that bastard Randolph, is now the idol of the day ; my soul sickens at the folly of the king !”

“ In faith, thou art too prejudiced, Ellen,” replied he gently ; “ Monteith hath been grossly injured ; and his conduct is such as must gain him the approbation of all good men ; but for him, at the battle I had lost my life.”

“ Better to have lost it than to have owed it to him !” replied she, as passionately as her decaying strength permitted. “ Oh for one hour in which I might involve them all in dismay and ruin ;
gladly,

gladly, joyfully would I perish with them !”

The Lord of Roskelyn was vexed to find that sickness, and even almost death, had made no alteration in the malicious and bitter spirit of his wife ; and, fearful of a repetition of the horrid scene he had witnessed before he went to the borders, he soon after left her.

On the ensuing day, finding she declined seeing either him or his daughter, he desired Matilda to prepare to attend him ; and, mounting their horses, they soon reached Edinburgh ; where he conducted her to pay her duty to her grandmother, who had taken up her residence in the dwelling occupied by the family of Monteith.

The innocent and affectionate heart of Matilda, for the first time in her life, appeared to mix with congenial minds ; the only drawback to her happiness was the

the health of her mother, and the anger she would incur from her, should the visit be known. She saw the tenderness of Ambrosine for her children without envy ; but an involuntary tear flowed as she drew the contrast between her conduct and that of her own mother.

“ Sweet niece,” said Ambrosine, embracing her, “ your father is now indeed truly kind ; this is a satisfaction the more welcome as it was unexpected.”

Monteith next embraced her ; and presented her to his sons and Phillippa, who all followed his example ; and, after a stay of some time, they parted mutually satisfied with each other.

Previous to their departure, Monteith, addressing Roskelyn and the dowager, said : — “ We mean to depart hence in a few days ; our kind mother hath already promised to accompany us home ; and I must request that you also, brother, favour
 your

vour us for a short time ; as I have a conference to hold with you, of the utmost importance to both, but most particularly to yourself. For the countess, her ill state of health deprives us of that hope ; but you will double the obligation, if you bring the Lady Matilda with you."

Roskelyn briefly, and in as gentle terms as the subject would allow, gave them to understand, that his wife had lost none of her former bitterness. For himself, he accepted the invitation ; but, on the part of Matilda, appeared irresolute. — " Surely she may attend me," replied the dowager, with an emotion of anger, " if ye be afraid to tell your wife she is at the castle of Monteith." — Roskelyn adopted the idea with a blush ; and, taking leave, left them.

" Now, in faith, mother," said Monteith, " you are too hard ; think you
not

not my brother hath enough with that vindictive, turbulent woman, without reproach?"

" 'Tis his own fault," replied she; " had he at first exerted a proper spirit, she would never have been so complete a tyrant: she would never have dared to act thus with *you*."

" Thank Heaven, I was spared the trial; for, by my life, I would sooner encounter an host of foes than combat her diabolical spirit; I never yet fled from an enemy, but, were she my opponent, I think I should leave her a clear field!"

" You over-rate your modesty," said De Bourg; " you would first have had a hard struggle for mastery."

" No, in truth, I should yield it up for a lost business, and seek, in some other country, that peace my own denied me."

" I am

“ I am of my father’s opinion,” said Randolph; “ I would fly such a woman as I would the pestilence.”

“ Pish, ye are cowards,” replied De Bourg; “ but what think ye of the Lady Matilda?”

“ She, inherits none of her mother’s evil qualities,” said the dowager; “ and is so gentle, that I much wonder her mother’s humours have not proved fatal to her: but, to the chevalier’s question,—What think you of her, Randolph?”

“ I think her most amiable, lady, from what I can judge from so short an acquaintance; and, better known, might almost consider her a sister.”

“ Almost a sister! nothing more, Randolph?” repeated the dowager.

“ Nothing more! nay, in truth, not so much; for I shall never love one so well as Phillippa.”—The words of Randolph

dolph escaped before he was aware ; and, suddenly checking himself, he remained silent.

“ Yet, in all probability, you will some time wed ; in which case, your wife must not be secondary.”

Randolph blushed deeply.—“ I spoke of sisters,” said he ; “ in all probability, I shall never marry ; my mind must change greatly before that event happens.”

“ Never !” repeated Monteith, laughing ; “ I once formed such a resolution ; but Ambrosine made me glad to retract it.”

“ And, when I meet an Ambrosine, I shall be equally glad,” answered Randolph more gaily ; “ so I pray to remain single till that time.”

The dowager was not quite satisfied with the reply ; but her present happiness was so much greater than she had for
years

years experienced, that all trivial objects gave way to it.

The troops soon after being disbanded, the whole party left the city, and returned to the castle of Monteith.

C H A P. XII.

Nor long after their arrival, they were joined by Ross, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and Sir Alexander ; De Bourg having accompanied them.

It was resolved, on the arrival of Roskelyn, to bring forward the discovery so interesting to him and Randolph ; and which, they surmised, might have different effects on the parties concerned. The point, however, above all others, was obtained, and which had never been expected,—the public avowal of the legitimacy of Monteith ; his liberation from banishment had also been effected by the same object, though by different means than were at first proposed. Of the future

ture affection of Randolph, no one entertained the smallest distrust; his attachment to the whole of the family was truly filial; so that, the bar once removed, there could be no doubt but he would proclaim his affection for Phillippa.

Some days after their arrival at Monteith, the dowager, in a private conversation with her son and Ambrosine, informed them that it was her intention, as his eldest sons would be sufficiently provided for, to take on herself the establishment of the young St. Clair; and, by an irrevocable deed, constitute him heir to the estates in her own power. The deed, she said, was already drawn, and ready for signature, and should be that day executed.

Monteith's honour was too great to suffer her to execute a deed which she might hereafter wish revoked.—“ Good mother,” replied he, “ though thoroughly

roughly sensible of your goodness, let me entreat you to delay it a few days; I have something to communicate on the arrival of my brother, that may make a change in your opinion."

"Not so," said she; "you have for yourself, and indeed for your children, disclaimed the domain of Roskelyn, but you have no power to bind them to forfeit their right: and, previous to my leaving the city, I do not hesitate to say, that I had an interview with the king and chancellor, both of whom have pledged me their words, to see hereafter, should they outlive Roskelyn, your children reinstated in their rightful possessions; without which my soul will never rest; nor ought you, from a false pride, in duty to prevent it."

"Agreed," replied he, "if Roskelyn dies without heirs.—Should he have a
VOL. IV. I son,

son, remember, lady, the contract is void."

"You act wilfully, but I submit; for there is small probability of his having more children."

Monteith then again pressed her to delay executing the deed for a few days; to which she at length unwillingly consented.

IN the mean time, all the former fears of Randolph again arose in his bosom; and, seeking an opportunity to converse alone with Monteith, he warmly pressed him, if the country should remain in peace, to suffer him to seek glory in some foreign land, that might be glad to accept his services. Monteith, who easily developed his reason, consented, on condition that a month should first elapse; when he left him to his liking.

The

The Lord of Ronaldsa remained in the city with some troops not yet disbanded ; he had behaved with distinguished courage in the field ; and, though he would still have rejoiced to receive the hand of Phillippa, no longer pressed it, convinced that the effort would be fruitless.

Randolph sincerely esteemed him, yet scarcely knew the nature of his own feelings : sometimes he wished him wedded to Phillippa ; but the thought was ever followed by an agonising coldness, which made him recoil, and forced him to have recourse to reflections, that called forth the glow of honour and probity on his cheeks.

More than once he had ventured to plead for his absent friend ; but the soft reproaches of Phillippa, and the tears she shed at his unkindness, made him feel that those conversations were better

avoided, as they only tended to increase what he thought his guilt and dishonour.

At length a messenger arrived to inform them that the Lord of Roskelyn approached ; when Monteith, with his sons and friends, went out to meet and bid him welcome. The union of the brothers caused universal joy ; music sounded from every quarter ; the priests, with father Thomas, supported by a junior brother, at their head, singing *Te Deum*, met them at the end of the avenue ; while the crowding vassals clapped their hands, and, with loud acclamations, mingled in the concert.

At the portal they were received by the noble hostess, who, offering to the Lord Roskelyn her cheek, bade him welcome with the true frankness of a sister.

“ Brother,” said she, “ I but half rejoice to see you ; for you bring not the Lady Matilda with you.”

“ Sweet

“ Sweet sister,” said he, “ let the omission bring no blame on me ; her mother’s commands and her own wishes detain her ; and I combated them not.”

“ The countess is, I trust, in better health then,” said Ambrosine, as Roskelyn led her to the hall.

“ I can scarcely reply to that question,” answered he ; “ her looks are ill, but she says her health is better : and, in reference to Matilda, she is entirely changed ; for she scarcely suffers her from her sight.”

“ That is no wonder ; she is formed to be her mother’s pride and happiness.”

“ I thank you for her, lady ; she is indeed mild and unassuming, and will hereafter, I trust, cultivate your favour.”

“ She hath it already ; I only wish to be more acquainted.”—As she spoke they entered the hall ; where Roskelyn, having paid his duty to the dowager,

was received warmly by the whole party.

Mutual congratulations over, a sumptuous repast was served, and the goblet went gaily round ; till, the vassals being withdrawn, Monteith filled a bumper to the health of the Lord of Roskelyn, and their new cemented friendship ; at the same time vowing it should never be broken by him.

Roskelyn drank the pledge, and a short pause ensued ; when Monteith, addressing the dowager, said : “ Pardon me, most honoured lady, for reverting to past times, but I mean no offence ; —remember you the seer Andrew ? ”

“ I do,” answered she ; “ even at this moment his prediction is in my thoughts. — It is accomplished : music resounds through the halls of Monteith, and sworn foes drink from the same friendly bowl ; yet I comprehend not
what

what was meant by the *red mane*, who should bite the ground, under the feet of a willing captive."

The name given in derision by the foldiers to Magnus, for the first time struck as material on the mind of Randolph; but the allusion to him was dark, and the impression momentary.

"It may hereafter be explained, lady," answered Monteith to his mother. "There was also another prediction some years after, inserted in the priest's books of Inveresk, by two vassals of my brother's, both of whom yet live."

"What was it, I pray you?" said Roskelyn.

"It related merely to the same event as the former; you may see it at the monastery at your leisure. I believe that ye will allow that I am not priest-ridden; yet these events convince me, that men

are merely agents, entrusted to transact the will of their Creator on earth ; and which if they fulfil worthily, they are rewarded ; if otherwise, punished."

" Most truly so," answered the dowager ; " but, dear son, this discourse tends to some end ; I pray shorten our suspense."

" As quick as may be. The second prediction, though to the same purport, was in different terms ; it spoke of a victory gained by a bloody arm ; the first, you know, of a willing captive."

Randolph started.

" I remember that well," replied the dowager ; " I pray you, proceed."

" My brave nephew slew the *red mane* !" exclaimed Roskelyn ; " and his arm, I heard, was dyed in blood : yet is he no captive ; the allusion therefore fails."

" It.

“ It doth not,” replied Monteith, rising from the lower end of the board, where Randolph sat next him.—“ Who can answer that question but the outlaws of Barra ?”

“ By my faith, that can I,” replied Sir Alexander M’Gregor ; “ Randolph was *my* captive ; assisted by my brother, I took him when he was so young that his mind, like a blank tablet, retained no impression. We gave him to St. Clair Monteith, who adopted him ; and my brother so well loved the boy, that, at his death, he left him heir to his estates.”

“ This is most true,” said Monteith ; “ and time, together with his unparalleled honour and affection, hath so woven him into my heart, that mine own children hold not a higher place in my love. Till this hour, he was a stranger to this secret ; which I wished

to reveal before friends. Say, think you I have done my duty?"

"Most truly," replied Roskelyn. Then turning to Sir Alexander, he added: "I pray you excuse me; but is he English, or know you his friends?"

"I do," replied the veteran; "they are noble Scots, and I mean to restore him."

Randolph, who had sat transfixed with astonishment, started up:—"If my father means to disclaim me," said he warmly, "I will no other; the world is before me; I will quit Scotland forever."

"You are wrong, noble youth," answered Roskelyn; "you may bring peace to a parent's breast: ah, how proudly must they acknowledge one, who, though so young, is so forward in the road of honour. Vain hope! who can recall the dead?—Oh, if my son—"

"Behold

“ Behold him here !” interrupted Monteith emphatically, at the same time laying his hand on Randolph’s shoulder.

Astonishment, mixed with doubt, dwelt on the features of all unacquainted with the secret, and deprived them of the power of utterance.

“ Ay,” added Sir Alexander, “ behold the young Montrose, of Roskelyn ! taken from his grandmother on the moor near the English border !”

Roskelyn was too much oppressed to speak : but the dowager, more collected, replied,—“ If he be indeed my grandson, he bears a natural mark.”

“ He doth,” said Monteith ; “ his arm is wine, or blood, stained from the wrist to the elbow ; which, shewing in the field when his armour was broken, was mistaken for the latter.”

Roskelyn was too much agitated to reply ; he gazed on the youth as if he
1. 6.
had.

had never seen him before : at length, clasping his hands, he answered, —
 “ Heaven is just. O Monteith, I forgive thee all but robbing me of the affection of my son ! ”

“ Not so,” answered Sir Alexander ;
 “ our Randolph will never forget his duty, though, for the present, he is too lost in wonder to perform it. Bear up, Roskelyn, all is for the best : thy son, bred in a court, had been a moth, a butterfly ; while, on the contrary, fostered in the rude winds of the Western Isles, he hath learned to be a man.”

Randolph, who would not have given up being the son of Monteith to be the heir of a diadem, could not collect himself sufficiently to act as duty should have prompted ; when Ambrosine rising, and approaching him, threw her arms around his neck, saying in a low voice, — “ My beloved youth, consider Monteith and
 myself

myself still as parents ; but to the Lord of Roskelyn thou owest thy birth, and nature hath claims not to be denied by a heart like thine.”

Randolph raised her hand to his lips, a manly tear fell from his eye.—“ Lady, I am yours for ever,” replied he in the same tone ; “ teach me, mould me to your will !”

Ambrosine led him to the feet of Roskelyn ; who, ere he could bend the knee, snatched him to his heart, exclaiming,—“ Brother, how severely hast thou been revenged : I have my right, take thou thine ; I resign the domain of Roskelyn without a pang !”

In noble, upright hearts, the voice of nature is strong : Randolph, or rather Montrose, was not deaf to its dictates ; he returned his father’s embrace, and repeatedly received his blessing.

“ Another

“ Another duty is yet to pay to our kind mother,” said Ambrosine; “ a grandson still, lady ; and, if ye can love him better, I pray ye do ; he doth justly deserve it.”

The dowager embraced Montrose ; yet a look of incredulity still marked her features.—“ If it be not too much, I conjure you, let me see your arm.”

Randolph, in his heart, for a moment wished the mark obliterated ; but, pushing up his sleeve, gave her the satisfaction she required.

At the sight, all doubt ceased.—“ Monteith,” said the dowager, “ whatever I may think of this act, I own myself too guilty to complain.”

“ Lady,” said Sir Alexander, “ Monteith hath neither merit nor guilt to claim in this business.—Lord Roskelyn, if your memory bears so far back, remember you the men who came from
St.

St. Clair, with an order for money upon Carnegie ?”

“ I do,” replied he, “ and also remember they were rudely treated.”

“ They were,” answered Sir Alexander, “ and the M‘Gregors are not to be affronted with impunity ; chance threw the opportunity of revenge in Randolph’s way, I joined in the cause, and Montrose became the victim of ——”

“ His father’s folly and injustice,” interrupted Roskelyn ; “ but away with unpleasant remembrances.”

“ Randolph M‘Gregor’s soul,” said Monteith, “ was the seat of the most exalted friendship : though happily not involved in my disgrace ; for he was at the time absent ; yet he shared our captivity, and did for me an act, which for himself he would have declined.”

“ Ah, well, though so long since, do I remember that fearful evening,” said the

the

the dowager, when Montrose was taken from me ; yet cannot I entirely comprehend the motives."

" The motives, lady," replied James M'Gregor, " were various ; ample revenge was amongst the foremost ; the infant might have been made the price of our freedom, had we been so inclined : Monteith's was the only dissenting voice against the act, he wished the boy to be restored unconditionally ; but his opinion was over-ruled, and he was forced to yield. We mutually took an oath to support each other in the cause, and to keep it secret."

" Aye, Roskelyn," said Hamilton, " we resolved to put it out of your power to breed us up an enemy in your son ; therefore, educated him ourselves, and now glory in our pupil."

" In faith do we. For myself and sons, I told you I resigned the domain
of

of Roskelyn for ever ; it is Randolph's ; and rather would I that he should enjoy it than any other man under Heaven ; nay, in justice, it is his ; for, had I been the acknowledged heir of Roskelyn, I had never inherited the estates of Monteith, which my uncle gave wholly as a compensation for the deprivation I had sustained."

The discourse was considerably longer ; and, in appearance, the most abstracted person was Randolph, who sat lost in thought ; a pause taking place, he appeared to collect himself, and, approaching Roskelyn, said : " Pardon me if, yet a while, I err in those marks of duty which I am convinced I owe you ; hereafter, I trust to shew that they neither originate in ingratitude or in want of affection. With your leave, I will retire for an hour ; my head is even yet giddy
with

with surprise; that time given to reflexion, I shall be more myself."

Roskelyn pressed his son's hand, and bade him use his pleasure; when the youth having left the hall, Monteith immediately rose, and, apologizing to his guests for a short absence, followed him. He overtook him on the portal. — "Randolph, my son," said he, "a few moments, I pray thee; I can enjoy no happiness while thou art sad; I have merely done an act of justice: could I, for the glory of being thought thy father, bereave thee of thy birthright?"

"Alas!" answered Randolph, "I have no birthright; in losing the name of Monteith, my being seems annihilated; would I had been slain before this cruel secret was divulged."

"Say not so; the Lord of Roskelyn's name is free from reproach; and the late discovery will diffuse a
vigour

vigour into his conduct he never before possessed."

"But the countess," said Randolph; "can I pay to that woman the duty due to a mother?"

"Pish, man; though I like not to tear up subjects that should be forgotten, remember mine, and thou hast the advantage; for the moment thou seest things through a false medium; when thou becomest calm, all will appear, as it truly is, for the best. Consider, hast thou, in this discovery, no *one* reason for exultation?"

Randolph blushed deeply. — "Father," replied he, "you probe my heart: what was the pride of my life, I am forced to relinquish; and what I considered my dishonour, must now, if ever I again know happiness, contribute towards it."

"Name

“ Name it,” said Monteith ; “ in the present exultation there are few things that Roskelyn will refuse thee ; and, for myself, task my friendship, it shall not shrink.”

Randolph hesitated ; at length said,—
“ My beloved Phillippa, like myself, appeared heart-struck with this discovery.”

“ Aye, because, like thyself, she took no time to consider the advantages that might accrue from it :—on second thoughts, feelt thou none ?”

Randolph snatched Monteith’s hand.
—“ Noble, best beloved of men,—were you indeed my father, said he :—if you consent,—if Phillippa ——”

“ Well,” interrupted Monteith gaily,
“ I will not pretend to misunderstand thee, if thou hast eloquence to persuade Ambrosine, let Phillippa be the pledge of friendship between us ; for thou, I
fancy,

fancy, wilt have but little difficulty to bring her into the scheme: but farewell, In neglect the duties of hospitality ; join us as speedily as thy convenience suits." — As Monteith spoke, he shook Randolph warmly by the hand, and hastily left him.

The discourse of Monteith did not fail of its effect ; Randolph found his thoughts turned into another channel ; and, consequently, relieved. To be Monteith's son, was indeed to his heart most desirable ; but, on second consideration, that advantage would lose none of its value by owing it to Phillippa. These reflexions appeared to give him new life ; his first intention had been to seek the solitude of the neighbouring wood, and to give free vent to his vexation ; but the discourse with Monteith changed that resolution ; and he retired calmly to his chamber, where, after remaining

maining an hour in private, he returned to the hall, with a mein so enlivened that all congratulated him on the change.

His first duty paid to Lord Roskelyn, he seated himself by his side; and, though he spoke but little during the evening, so far ingratiated himself with his father, that the past omission was forgotten. At the time of retiring to rest, he attended him to his chamber, and, in private, received those testimonies of affection that had been restrained before so full an assembly.

Randolph's heart was touched; he returned his father's caresses, and vowed him future affection and obedience. Roskelyn's satisfaction was unbounded: to find a son after such an absence, and a son his whole country concurred in admiring, was a joy almost too great for nature to support; he pressed him in his arms, wept with pleasure on his
 7 neck,

neck, and bade him command all he had freely ; as the greatest satisfaction he could feel was to make him happy. Randolph kissed his hand ; and, the first effusion of paternal affection over, said, —“ My dear father, to contend with the noble Monteith, when he is resolved, would be as unavailable as to strive with the waves of the sea, or, in truth, we ought to yield up the domain of Roskelyn, which, in justice, is his : however, to draw a line of some justice between us, I pray you let the revenues of the many years he was deprived of the estates of Monteith be made up ; they are not justly ours, and will hang heavy on my heart.”

“ My dear son,” replied Roskelyn, “ I have, before my departure for this happy visit, given orders for that purpose, and would willingly add the domain of Roskelyn ; even then, with such
a son

a son as thee, I should think myself the richest man in Scotland."

"There is yet one thing that gives me pain," said Randolph; "I fear my mother's hatred to the house of Monteth will lead her to expect from me a conduct towards them, which I neither can nor will submit to. In all duty I will obey her; but must forget to live before I forget to love them."

"It shall not be required; her vindictive spirit hath been the torment of my life; but its power over me hath ceased. In all befitting her sex and rank she shall command; but, henceforth, I will be master of mine own."

"There was a proposal," said Randolph in some confusion, "before this discovery took place, to unite the families; I would it might still take effect."

"As how, my son?"

"The

“ The Lady Ambrosine,” replied Randolph with increased confusion, “ I need not say, possesses every virtue ; the most affectionate wife, the most tender mother, the best of friends : ever from my infancy have I looked up to her with admiration and love. She, my dear father, hath a daughter, whose beauty is her smallest perfection ; for she hath imbibed the lessons of her excellent mother, and she alone of all womankind can make me happy.”

“ Then may she be thine, and Heaven bless your union ! My consent you need not doubt, nor, I trust, Monteith’s ; for it will cement the family in bonds which, I trust, will never be broken.”

Randolph returned the most affectionate thanks to his father ; and, after conversing till the night was far advanced, left him ; Lord Roskelyn first requesting him to attend him at an early

hour.—“ My beloved Montrose,” said he, “ even the blessed sun will not gladden my sight till I see thee ! my happiness is so great, that I shall think it by morn merely a dream, and try to sleep and renew it !”

CHAP. XIII.

AT an early hour Montrose called on his father, whom he found already risen. After some conversation, they adjourned to the hall, where the guests were assembled. The breakfast over, Roskelyn, drawing Monteith and his wife apart, made the proposal for his son. Monteith smiled at the young man's haste; but, with Ambrosine, gave his entire concurrence, so Phillippa consented.

The family dividing into different pursuits, Ambrosine and Phillippa retired; but were speedily joined by the chief. — “I come a petitioner to ye,” said he; “I have received an offer for Phillippa, which, I trust, she will not refuse; at least,

least, I hope, she will give it a larger consideration than she did the suit of the Lord of Ronaldsa."

"Dear father," said she, "I had hopes these vexations would no more return; for it distresses my heart not to act to your wishes; and yet, indeed, I can never marry!"

"Never is a long period," replied Ambrosine: "I know the party; he is unexceptionable in the eyes of all your friends, and one whose vows few women would refuse."

"I would he would bear them to where they would be more welcome! Methinks he hath chosen an ill hour, when our family is busied with the late discovery; for my part, I think of nothing else; sleep hath not since visited my eye-lids!"

"Nay," said Monteith, "Montrose hath this union as much at heart as myself;

self; wilt thou converse with him on the subject?"

"No, I pray you, dear father; he hath often wished to sacrifice me to Ronaldsa, though he knew I loved him not, and now means to persecute me with some of his new connexions.—I have been wicked," added she, weeping; "for, I shame to say, I loved Randolph best of all my brothers; and I am properly punished. Last night my heart bled for his distress; but this morning he appears perfectly satisfied; no doubt he will soon forget us all!"

"I do not believe it," said Ambrosine; "but you stray from the subject; you cannot form a decided opinion with justice without seeing the party."

"Dear mother," answered she, "never on any other subject shall you complain of my disobedience; but on this, I pray ye, spare me; person, rank, wealth,

nay, even merit, cannot alter my resolves !”

“ I grieve to hear it,” said Monteith ;
 “ and feel disappointed, as will also my brother Roskelyn, who warmly wished to cement the union of the two families by this tie.”

“ What tie, father ?” replied Phillippa with astonishment.

“ Nay, my good girl,” returned he gravely, “ never shall it be said that any family motive influenced me, where thy happiness was concerned : I am indeed grieved for the youth ; for, in truth, he hath loved thee since his early infancy ; and, when he spoke of uniting thee to Ronaldsa, his heart and honour were not in unison.”

“ Dear father,” said she blushing,
 “ but did you indeed mean Randolph ?”

“ Undoubtedly ; but thou wouldst not give me time for explanation : talk farther

ther on this business with thy mother, and she will convey thy denial to our Randolph in softer terms than I might use; for well I know it will vex him almost to death."

As Monteith spoke, he quitted them; when Phillippa, throwing her arm round her mother, said,—“ I would sooner die than vex Randolph!—Is not my father cruel, lady, to deceive me so? I thought he meant some fearful strange man like Ronaldsa."

Ambrosine could not suppress a smile.—“ A part of thy objections are then done away," said she.—At that moment a gentle stroke on the chamber-door announced an intruder: it was Randolph.—“ Beloved friends," said he, “ in your presence my heart seeks to find a resting-place; and my most honoured father Monteith, for I can call him by

no other name, told me ye were alone, and would pardon me."

"Willingly: I joy to see your mind more collected than yesterday."

"It is: but the happiness of my life must ever depend upon the house of Monteith.—My dear Phillippa hath been in tears; perhaps you have told her my wishes, lady, and she declines them; if so, I pray ye, let the subject cease; for true affection deals not in persecution!"

"Randolph," replied Phillippa, laying her hand upon his arm with her usual freedom, "is it right to doubt my affection? More justly ought I to doubt thine, who could wish to unite me to Ronaldsa."

"Ah, Phillippa, hadst thou seen my heart! —"

"We know it now, my dear youth," said Ambrosine; "let that suffice.—Phillippa, I shall say to thy father, thou wilt

wilt take some time to consider on the business he spoke of this morning : say, is it not so ?”

“ As your kindness shall direct, dear mother.”

“ Well then, for the present, I leave ye : the entertainment of our guests must be attended to ; and the dowager hath been left since breakfast.”

After the departure of Ambrosine, Randolph, or rather Montrose, so warmly urged his suit, that Phillippa’s few objections were soon vanquished ; and, the following day, the happiness of the family was increased, by her avowal that she should no longer contend against the commands of her father.

The utmost joy reigned not only within the castle, but also among the surrounding vassals ; who, by the beneficence of their noble master, appeared to have gained a fresh existence : among

those, none felt more satisfaction than the artless Jean and her mother ; the latter of whom, on being shewn Randolph's arm, screamed and fainted ; and, on her revival, proclaimed, by the blessed Virgin, it was Montrose of Roskelyn, whom she had suckled at her breast. The matron was enriched by the gifts of the noble guests, who resolved to dedicate one week to pleasure, and then retire to their several domains ; at which period Montrose was to be presented to his mother.

In the mean time, the days passed in feasting ; and the bell tolled the hour of midnight, unnoticed by the sprightly dancers in the hall, where now all the youths in the vicinity assembled.

One night, when all were thus employed, a domestic entered hastily, and whispered the chief ; who immediately left his guests, and withdrew into a private

vate chamber, where, to his great astonishment, he found the Lord of Ronaldsa supporting a fainting female, wrapped in a large mantle. — “ Ronaldsa, my brave youth,” said Monteith, “ what means this ; bring ye us a wife ? If so, she is right welcome.”

“ My noble friend,” replied Ronaldsa, “ no wife, but a cruelly used daughter, who claims *your* protection, if her father should have left you.”

Monteith snatched the torch from the table, where it stood. — “ Amazement ! Matilda !” exclaimed he, “ at this time of night too, without female attendants, and pale, sick, and disordered ! what may this mean ?”

“ ’Tis no time for relations,” replied Ronaldsa ; “ for two days and nights she hath been on horseback, without rest or food, save some manchet and wine, which I have almost forced her

to take : let it suffice, you *know* the Lady Roskelyn. If you doubt my honour, I am here."

"I do not doubt it ; but astonishment overpowers me.—Call," said he to one of his vassals, "the Lady Ambrosine ; who will prescribe best for this poor sufferer."

"Is my father here, dear uncle ?" said Matilda faintly.

"He is ; but, unless you wish it, he had better not know of your arrival till to-morrow, when your strength may be somewhat recruited, and both better prepared for the meeting."

"I thank you, it will indeed be best. To the Lord of Ronaldsa I owe more than life ; let him not, I conjure you, incur blame on my account."

As she spoke, Ambrosine joined them : her surprise equalled her husband's ; but, ordering Matilda to be conveyed to bed,
and

and proper refreshments given her, she coincided in her husband's opinion of remaining silent till the morning.

The Lord of Ronaldsa also immediately retired ; as did the six domestics he had with him : and, a general order being given for the arrival of strangers not to be noticed, no word transpired.

C H A P. XIV.

Two of the Lady Ambrosine's women sat up during the night with Matilda; who, in the morning, was so far recruited, that she entreated, as soon as breakfast was over, that her father would visit her in her chamber; praying, at the same time, the presence of her uncle, with the dowager, Ambrosine, and Philippa.

Astonished at what he heard, and scarcely crediting his senses, Roskelyn flew to her with the utmost speed, and, giving scarcely a moment to her changed appearance, demanded how she came to forsake the protection of her mother.

“ My

“ My life upon her truth,” said Ambrosine ; “ give her time, and she will explain all to your satisfaction.”

“ Dear father, I am not to blame : and will truly relate all that has happened.—My mother, though confined to her chamber, has been well acquainted with all that passed ; and, among other circumstances, was told that you wished to unite me to the young Randolph Monteith ; an union which, she vowed, was there no other way to prevent, she would rather slay me with her own hand.

“ This violence began even the day you left us ; before which, you may recollect, she appeared more affectionate to me than since her illness. That same afternoon, she, in conversation, informed me, that her cousin Sir John Stuart, who had long resided in England, was returned, and would on that night sup
at

at Roskelyn. He came; and his attentions were so pointed, that I could not misunderstand their meaning. They, however, gave me little concern; for I well knew you, my dear father, would not approve such an alliance; and I had no supposition of violence. I was mistaken; for, even on the morrow, my mother gave me to understand, he was the man she had chosen for me; that resistance was fruitless, as she had sent for him on the first knowledge of the projected union with Randolph; and that I should be privately married in the chapel of Roskelyn. In vain I pleaded your absence: she accused me of, what St. Mary knows I never thought of, a partiality for the young Randolph; and my denial served but to increase her anger. She vowed to shew you she would be the principal agent in disposing of me; which should never be to a son of Monteth:

teith : to this she added many invectives, that would ill become me to repeat ; adding, that Sir John Stuart was her nearest of blood, and had the most right to me, her only child. Her words and threats made me very sorrowful ; but, though I trembled, I assumed courage sufficient to say, no power on earth should force me to wed without your consent.

“ Sir John was constantly with us, and she never suffered me from her sight ; or, I believe, I should have endeavoured to fly to you. Add to this, your most trusty vassals had attended you ; and I was left in a dilemma that almost drove me to despair. In this state, one morning, the Lord of Ronaldsa was announced. My mother paused before she ordered him to be admitted ; but, not knowing he had remained in the city, she doubtless concluded he came from
Mon-

Monteith, and that she should learn some tidings from thence : she whispered her cousin, who left the hall ; and then ordered the domestics to shew the Lord of Ronaldsa in.

“ Having paid her his respects, he said, he came to crave her commands, if she had any, to her lord ; as he was to depart in three days for Monteith, where he understood you then were.

She replied she had none ; that she had supposed he attended his friends in their journey ; but that he might inform you all were well at home. She spoke with distant and cold politeness, and appeared to view him with suspicion : nor was it lost on me, that he appeared to have a motive for his visit beyond what he explained.

“ I regarded this as the only opportunity I should have, and resolved, if possible, not to let it escape ; therefore, under

der pretence of more light to work at my embroidery, I took my seat at the window at the extremity of the hall. As the Lord of Ronaldsa passed me, he bowed ; and, rising, I said aloud,—‘ I pray you, present my duty to my lord and father ;’ then added in a lower tone, —‘ Tell him to fly to his child, or she is undone.’

“ Though the utmost astonishment marked his features, he replied,—‘ I will bear your message truly, lady ;’ and, again bowing, he left us.

“ The length and height of the hall prevented my mother from catching the last part of what I said ; but she was convinced I had added somewhat in an under-tone, and insisted on knowing the purport. Heaven forgive me the falsehood I was driven to ; I told her it was merely duty ; but she, I am convinced, did not believe me, and hastened her project.

project accordingly. During the whole of that day and the next, she never suffered me to quit her ; and I was constantly persecuted with the addresses of her cousin. At night, she made me sleep in her chamber ; and my only hope rested upon the speed of the Lord of Ronaldsa's conveying my message to you. On the next morning, I observed several chests borne from the castle ; and, as we sat at dinner, methought some of the vassals looked at me with uncommon meaning and pity. To my great surprise, near evening, my mother said she should ride to Leith ; and bade me prepare to accompany her. I foresaw some scheme, but was far from suspecting the extent ; I, however, had no subterfuge, and was obliged to attend her. Sir John Stuart and four of his men alone escorted us ; and it was beyond the hour of vespers when we reached

reached the chapel which stands at a short distance from the shore. Neither my mother nor Sir John spoke much during the way; though the pallid looks of the countess proclaimed she rode ill at ease from her decaying health. At the door of the chapel Sir John lifted her from her horse, and did the same by me. The lone situation, the hour, the company, all filled me with dread; I was scarcely able to stand.—‘ Dear mother,’ said I, ‘ what mean you? ’tis past evening prayer; I pray you, enter not the chapel.’

“ Foolish girl,” replied she, ‘ come on; this hour decides thy fate: my enemies shall not triumph in my death; for the wealth of Roskelyn shall enrich the sunken fortunes of my father’s house.’ As she spoke, she drew my arm under hers, Sir John took the other, and resistance was vain: we entered the chapel,

6

which

which was only enlightened by a few tapers, which served to shew a priest standing at the altar, holding a book. The whole of the plan now struck me. Among the vassals of my father's house, such a scheme of violence would have been impracticable ; but here I had no friends, and must fall an easy prey."—

Roskelyn, whose anger was raised to a pitch of fury, could bear no more ; in the bitterness of his heart, he invoked a curse on the head of the woman he had so many years idolized, and vowed never more to hold converse or friendship with her !

In the warmth of the moment, Monteith applauded his intentions ; but Ambrosine, chiding both, said, — “ Remember she is mother of two children, who do honour to human nature.—Proceed, dear niece, say only, did you escape the accomplishment of the wicked design ?

design? and all will be more calm to wait the conclusion."

"Do so," said Monteith; "but shrink not, Matilda; thou hast friends to repay the injury tenfold. If thy enthrallment was completed, blood shall obliterate the affront, and set thee free from such accursed vows!"

"The Virgin be praised, no sacred ties bind me," replied she; "from them my soul is clear; though, alas! I fear not from blood!"

"Proceed, my love," said Ambrosine; "if the blood of the guilty has fallen, innocence fought it not, and the forfeiture be on their own heads."

"We entered the chapel," resumed Matilda, "and were instantly joined by an old priest, who loudly declaimed against disobedience; but I was too much agitated either to pay attention to his discourse, or profit by his instruction.

I vehe-

I vehemently protested against their intentions, and called upon the priests to answer before Heaven their forcing a child to wedlock against the will of her father. They were deaf to my remonstrances, or too well instructed and paid, to listen to them. I was dragged to the altar; the priest opened his book; my mother called on him to use dispatch; Sir John seized my hand, which I struggled to get loose; and the sacrilegious rites began. Patience had forsaken me, and my reason would speedily have followed, had not my mind suddenly been diverted into another channel. Sir John Stuart's men stood on the outside of the chapel, from whence the sound of contention and struggling caught my ear; and, the moment after, six armed men rushed in and ran up to the altar.

“What do ye here at this late hour?” said the principal; “Secrecy and
dark-

darkness betoken guilt : a daughter of the house of Roskelyn hath need of neither.—‘Speak, lady,’ added he, turning to me ; ‘ why is your father absent at such a moment ? Act ye against his will ? ’

“ My spirits appeared instantly to return ; I readily recognized the Lord of Ronaldsa, and felt relieved from danger. My mother spoke, but was almost inarticulate from passion.—‘ My lord,’ said I, ‘ my honoured father, as you know, is far distant : my mother, alas ! disregards the cries of her child ; and I have no friend ! —’

“ Your uncle’s friend Ronaldsa, lady, is devoted in this cause to serve you ; speak how it may be done, and you shall be obeyed.’

“ Oh if it were possible to bear me to him ! there only can I be safe.’

“ Come on then,’ said he, snatching my hand from the grasp of Sir John

Stuart, who still held it : ‘ fear nothing ; I will conduct you safe to his arms.’

“ Surprise, as I conjecture, had hitherto kept Sir John silent ; and my mother, (I tremble at the recollection,) overpowered with weakness and rage, leaned over the altar for support, her features swollen with passion, and every limb agitated.

“ Heaven forgive me for being the cause of her anger ! it was an involuntary offence, and proceeded from fatal necessity.”——

“ Matilda,” interrupted the Lord of Roskelyn impatiently, “ conclude thy story, and to prayers afterwards.”

“ I will : but indeed the conflict was terrible. Sir John, with many invectives, half drew his sword ; but either fear, or the anathema which the two priests denounced against such deeds, prevented him using it ; and Ronaldsa
and

and his men, whose weapons were all unsheathed, surrounding me, I was in a moment borne from the chapel.

“ I heard my mother scream, and would fain, on a second thought, have turned back ; but, in this case, my deliverer was deaf to my entreaties ; I was placed on my own horse, and we instantly departed.

“ We had proceeded but a short way when we heard the noise of horses ; and, by the light of the moon, discovered Sir John and his men in pursuit of us. The Lord of Ronaldsa, commanding four of his adherents to pursue their way with me, made a stand ; and the moment after I heard the dreadful clashing of swords ; but my guides urged such speed, that we almost instantaneously lost the sound.

“ As I should judge, we had advanced about two miles, when the Lord of Ronaldsa and his followers again

joined us. I was unable to testify my fears ; and, during the night, no explanation took place.

“ Early in the morning, we were forced to rest and feed our beasts, and he obliged me to take some refreshment ; and then, at my request, informed me that he had wounded Sir John Stuart, though not to death.

“ Of my mother, he knew nothing since we left her in the chapel. He also told me, that, on the day he received the message from me at Roskelyn, he dispatched letters to my uncle with the purport, as he was not himself prepared to depart immediately.” —

“ None such have arrived,” said Monteith, “ or we should have lost no time in hastening to you.”

“ The fatigue I underwent during the journey,” resumed Matilda, “ is more than I can describe ; for I refused

to make any more stay than what was absolutely necessary for the horses, and which were so tired that we were forced to procure others at Stirling.

“ Such is my account, dear father ; what more you wish to know, the Lord of Ronaldsa will doubtless satisfy you ; only say you are not displeased with me.”

Roskelyn embraced his daughter, as did the whole party ; soon after which, Monteith and his brother left them, to inquire farther particulars of Ronaldsa.

“ Dear lady,” said Matilda, addressing Ambrosine, “ pardon me ; but, in the discourse, a word escaped you, of which, at the moment, I did not dare ask an explanation ; did you not allude to my mother having two children ?”

To the utter amazement of Matilda, Ambrosine particularly informed her of her affinity to Randolph ; intelligence which she received with a satisfaction

that appeared to banish every unpleasant remembrance.—“ Can it indeed be possible,” exclaimed she rapturously, “ that I have a brother? and such a brother! Happy girl that I am! a noble, a brave youth! When this is known, who will dare to insult Matilda!”

Ambrosine was pleased with her warmth; but smiling, she replied,—“ True, Matilda, you have found a brother; but he will rob you of half your wealth.”

“ No, lady, he will increase it beyond all price. Oh how I long to see him! to tell him how truly, how sincerely I love him! Sweet Phillippa, though the advantage be mine, I could almost pity you for losing such a brother!”

Phillippa blushed; but made no reply.

“ Is there then no relationship as near and dear as that of sister?” said the dowager: “ if there be, Phillippa, may perhaps,

perhaps, hereafter, claim that to Montrose."

"I understand you, lady; Phillippa will be my sister," said she, throwing her arms round her neck; "and I will love her dearly; for where could I find one so lovely? Methought last night I was the most unfortunate of all creatures; but this morning I am one of the most happy."

"If, among the relations I possess, I feel sorrow and pity for any," said Ambrosine, "it is for the countess of Roskelyn, who voluntarily deprives herself of enjoyments that gladden every other heart."

"Fie upon her," replied the dowager, "name her not. I rejoice to see, my son Roskelyn hath at length shaken off the fascination that so long hath disgraced him."

“ My poor mother, alas ! I fear,” said Matilda, “ is fast hastening to the grave : never shall I forget her countenance at the chapel,—so pale and discoloured ; I would I had gone back ! yet sickness, and a view of death, seemed rather to render her more firm to her purpose than to move her from it.—Dear lady,” added she, taking the dowager’s hand, “ remember her only as the mother of the gallant Montrose, and all other remembrances will give place.”

Ambrosine was charmed with the duty of Matilda ; and, observing that she still looked pale and languid, with the dowager, soon after retired ; leaving Phillippa alone to attend her.

C H A P. XV.

THOUGH Monteith and Roskelyn had no doubt of the veracity of Matilda, they resolved to hear the account of Ronaldsa; and both paying him such thanks as the service rendered required, entreated him to favour them therewith. With the candour and openness that ever accompanies true honour, he immediately complied, and begun as follows:

“ I need **not** repeat why I remained in the city ;—the disbanding of the troops not being completed. Daily some were discharged, and received a sum sufficient to take them home to their families: among those was one, whom, on paying him his stipend, I immediately recognised

for the son of a vassal of my deceased father, who for some offence had been banished the island. The poor fellow, finding he was known, appeared confused; but, as the son could not with justice be condemned for the error of his father, and had moreover been severely wounded in the battle of Sark, I spoke to him with a kindness that speedily obliterated unpleasant remembrances. His father, he informed me, had been in England, where he engaged in the service of Sir John Stuart, who was now in Scotland on a visit at the castle of Roskelyn. He added that his father had never been happy since he left Ronaldsa; and, in short, testified so much attachment to his native land, and the service he had been accustomed to, that I was won to tell him, as *he* had been a brave foldier, I pardoned his father for his sake, and that he might return to his

his country and old allegiance as speedily as he found it convenient. The gratitude of the youth, whose name is Robert, was unbounded; he fell at my feet; and the whole concluded by my engaging him to remain in my service.

“ On the ensuing day, I received the personal thanks of the father, whose wife I found was yet at Ronaldsa; and, giving him a small sum, I bade him hasten thither, telling him all past was forgotten, and, if deserving, he should find me his friend.

“ The master-key to the human heart, when not entirely corrupt, is gratitude; and though, undesignedly, I had opened his, he threw himself at my feet, and begged me to counsel him in what he was about to transact; as he knew I was, if not materially concerned, at least attached to a family of near affinity to those whom it would affect. In short,

L 6

he

he informed me, that his master, Sir John Stuart, had come from England in consequence of an invitation from the Countess of Roskelyn, to wed her daughter; but that the young lady refused; the match being the project of the countess, unknown to her lord.

“ I confess I scarcely at first gave credit to what I heard; I, however, questioned him narrowly, and at length learned, that the countess, having no son, was said to be resolved that the wealth of her daughter should centre in her own family. Pardon me, but, from some circumstances I had heard relative to the temper of the countess, I was not prepossessed in her favour; and, interrogating the man farther, with promises to reward him if he merited my protection, he added, that Sir John Stuart had a small vessel off the harbour of Leith; and, did not the Lady Matilda
consent

consent willingly, such means, he suspected, would be used as must enforce compliance. Having learned all I could, I dismissed him with a present, telling him to be careful in conveying me all the information he could ; and, for that purpose, I sent his son **Robert** to be in the vicinity of the castle.

“ Giving the night to reflexion, I resolved, though unknown to the countess, to visit Roskelyn, under the pretence of inquiring whether she had any commands to her lord. There I received a short hint from the Lady Matilda, who appeared agitated and pale ; which resolved me to become an active agent in the business.

“ On my return to the city, I instantly wrote an account to the chief Monteith, at the same time assuring him, that I would consider myself as far as possible the brother of the family, until
the

the Lord Roskelyn or himself should arrive.

“ Yet I have received no such letters,” interrupted the chief.

“ The reason I cannot conjecture,” replied Ronaldsa ; “ for I dispatched the advice by the most trusty of my vassals ; a man whose honesty hath never been impeached.”

“ ’Tis strange,” answered Roskelyn ; “ but I pray ye proceed.”

“ I will. The father of Robert, anxious to win my favour, even that night, after I had been to Roskelyn, sent his son, who called me from my bed to inform me, that from some cause, but what his father knew not, the business was suddenly hastened ; the vessel was ordered to be prepared ; and he suspected, from words that had dropped from Sir John, that a marriage was to take place immediately ; after which
they

they were to embark for England, till the first confusion arising from such a step had subsided. The Lady Matilda, he added, was still firm in her refusal ; but the countess, if possible, appeared more and more resolved ; and the match was too advantageous to Sir John to be declined.

“ However I might feel that I had no right to interfere, I considered there was none near of kindred on the spot ; and, therefore, resolved to take the measures I thought necessary. Robert assured me, should there be occasion, his father would join me ; and that, for himself, he was devoted to my service : to these men I added four more, whom I stationed the ensuing morning in the woods of Roskelyn. In the afternoon I joined them, when I learned from Robert, that all the baggage of Sir John Stuart had that day been conveyed on board his vessel ;

vessel ; and his men were ordered to be ready early in the evening to attend him.

“ Robert was our spy ; and, at sunset, he joined us almost breathless with haste, informing us the countess, with the Lady Matilda and Sir John, were set out on horseback for Leith. We lost no time, but, spurring our beast, followed and reached them some few minutes after they entered the solitary chapel that stands near the shore. I rushed in, and saw force was offered to obtain the Lady Matilda’s vows ;—no father or brother’s presence sanctioned the act, and the duty of a man called upon me to protect her —.”

“ Generous Ronaldsa,” interrupted Roskelyn, how can I ever sufficiently thank you ?”

“ Name it not ; I was happy to rescue her. The countess, apparently sinking on the pavement, called upon her to
return ;

return ; but I refused to let her comply ; and placing her upon her horse, which stood at the entrance of the chapel, we lost no time. Sir John speedily followed ; his men, by the interference and persuasion of Robert's father, had hitherto made no resistance. He called upon me to defend myself ; but soon fell, and, as I fear, mortally wounded ; though I concealed that circumstance from the Lady Matilda. I much feared she would have sunk under the fatigue she underwent ; but I could not persuade her to rest by the way. I sent one of my vassals to the soldiery, with a letter to the principal commander in my absence, desiring him to detain them a few days. Robert and his father, with my own men, attended us ; but, for the safety of the poor fellow who was to have conveyed my letter to the chief, I have the most anxious fears ; for I know
him

him to be faithful. You now are informed of every particular : if what I have done meets your approbation, I am satisfied ; if otherwise, my motives, which were disinterested, must excuse me."

The praises which Monteith and Roskelyn bestowed on Ronaldsa, gratified the youth ; who was speedily informed of the discovery which had taken place respecting Randolph ; and their future intentions to unite the families in yet stricter bonds by marriage.—“ Thou must do me the justice, noble youth,” said the chief, “ to avow I wished to call thee my son ; and would now that I had another daughter, who might be more sensible of thy deserts than Philippa : but, accustomed from her cradle to Montrose, he became, even unknown to herself, master of her heart.”

“ Generous chief, I thank you,” replied Ronaldsa, “ and perforce must
yield

yield to what cannot be avoided ; of all men, I am least inclined to envy the friend whom I regard above all others.”

Montrose, who, with James Monteith, De Bourg, and others, had risen early to the chace, at that moment entered the hall. Informed of what had passed, all highly applauded Ronaldsa ; while Montrose, embracing him, said,—“ Dear friend, pardon me ; I am an innocent rival ; my heart and that of Phillippa, like two of the southern rose-buds, grew together by the mere impulse of nature, and to separate one, I am convinced, would have been death to the other.”

“ Happy may you be,” replied Ronaldsa ; “ the love which meets no return fades as doth the tree which meets no kindly rain to nourish its root : that I could have devoted my life to the Lady Phillippa is most true ; but her inclinations were uncongenial ;
and

and I shall now rejoice to see her happy to her own wishes. Though born in the frozen isles of Orkney, I have a warm heart, Montrose; and am resolved never to wed unless I can gain a heart in return for mine."

"Fairly determined," replied Monteith; "I honour thy resolution, and predict it will lead to happiness."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of one of the vassals, who informed the chief that a messenger, exhausted with the speed he had made, craved admittance on business of the utmost import.

Monteith commanded him to be brought in; when a peasant appeared, and, presenting a letter to the chief, said,—"Noble master, the true bearer of these dispatches lies dangerously ill within a few miles of Falkirk; where he was thrown from his horse, and so violently
bruised

bruised in the head, that, for near two days, he lay without recovering his reason; on the first return of which, he conjured me, his host, to bear these letters to you, and commendations from his noble lord."

"My letters!" exclaimed Ronaldsa; "they have indeed come late: but my honest friend," added he, addressing the peasant; "thy zeal is the same: let my faithful servant lack no kindness or help; and here is my purse to repay thy care; I pray thee, is he better?"

The stranger replied in the affirmative; and Monteith giving him into the care of his vassals, ordered him to be particularly attended to.

The letters to Monteith accorded exactly with what Ronaldsa had related; and the thanks of the Lord of Roskelyn were again renewed, till they became painful to the youth. De Bourg at length,

length, with his usual humour, interrupted the discourse : — “ Pish,” said he, “ empty thanks may be compared to tantalizing a hungry fellow with a fair feast, carved in wood, or moulded in wax, beautiful to the eye, but repugnant to the stomach. In this case, were I the Jason who had borne off the golden fleece, by my life, nothing less than keeping the prize should satisfy me.”

“ De Bourg,” replied Monteith, “ either thy honesty or the impudence of thy country makes thee declare openly what others only think or wish ; but enough on the subject ; Ronaldsa blushes like a girl, a denial to thy opinion.”

“ Not so,” said De Bourg ; “ you may be a good soldier, St. Clair, but, for knowledge of the human heart, you are a mere greenhorn : when men blush, it is from the warmth of their hearts ;
when

when they turn pale, it is from a contrary emotion ; and my purse to thine, in this case, I have guessed rightly : Ronaldsa shall be umpire between us."

" Agreed," replied Monteith.

" Nay then, chevalier," said Ronaldsa, " the purse is yours. If I did blush, it was not the result of coldness ; I have not, in faith, contemplated the beauties of the amiable and gentle Matilda for two days with impunity ; and, could I hereafter win her heart, and gain the approbation of her father, I should still be happy."

" I never lost a purse so willingly in my life," answered Monteith ; but what says my brother, and our Montrose, to this business ?"

" Why, in faith," replied Roskelyn, " I can only say, that, if the parties agree, I will swear that the castle of Monteith abounds with blessings ; since
it

it hath given me two of the most gallant lads in Scotland."

"And I," said Montrose, embracing Ronaldsa, "shall accomplish my long wished purpose, by a means that will give joy, instead of sadness, to my heart,—that of claiming Ronaldsa as a brother."

The young lord returned the salute; when Montrose claimed permission to see his sister; which was immediately granted.

"Nay, come with me, Ronaldsa," said he; "thou hast at least acted a brother's part by Matilda, and may surely claim a brother's thanks."

Ronaldsa needed no second invitation; and they adjourned to the gallery, where, causing Phillippa to be informed they waited to see her, she, with her cousin, speedily joined them.

The

The artless joy with which Matilda received her brother, the blushing thanks she bestowed on Ronaldsa, were not without their effect on both their hearts; the first found her, in his mind, superior to all the women he had ever seen, the Lady Ambrosine and Philippa excepted; while Ronaldsa, at every glance, saw fresh charms, which made her, in his eye, superior to either; he compared her person mentally with that of Philippa, and found it, on the whole, equally beautiful, and more to his liking, from the gentleness of her demeanour, and the gratitude she expressed towards him.

Matilda, though weak and languid, joined the party at dinner. The anger of the Lord of Roskelyn against his countess, caused him now to be in no haste to make her a sharer in his satisfaction;

faction ; and Montrose felt at once too happy at Monteith, and too much displeasure against her, to press his father to hasten his departure.

CHAP. XVI.

IN the bosom of friendship, and the soft enthrallment of mutual love, some days had passed at the castle of Monteith, when the peace was broken on by an especial messenger with dispatches, informing the Lord of Roskelyn that his countess lay at the point of death. The dutiful Matilda not only testified, but in reality felt more grief on the occasion than any other person ; but the Lord of Roskelyn had lately gained a perseverance not to be easily moved, and he resolutely refused to let her leave Monteith.

Accompanied only by Montrose and Ronaldfa, with their dependents, he
M 2 departed

departed on his journey ; and, leaving the young lord in the city, he, with his son, proceeded to the castle of Roskelyn ; but, ere he reached it, the black banner waving over the gate foretold their errand was fruitless.

“ Gracious Heaven,” exclaimed he, “ is it indeed thus ? Unhappy Ellen, the saints be merciful to thy soul ! I trust thy punishment was on earth ! for thou hast died unblest with the tidings that thou wert mother to such a son.”

Montrose, however he might think of his mother living, in death felt the claims of nature on his heart.—“ Dear father,” said he, “ in this case I know not how to speak comfort ; but if from your children a double share of duty can soften the loss, both Matilda -and myself will pay it.”

“ I doubt it not,” replied Roskelyn ; “ cruel and unfeeling as was thy mother,

ther, in spite of my reason I loved her ; yet, after her conduct to Matilda, resolved to live with her no more."

On reaching the castle, they found the countess had died the evening before. On losing Matilda in the chapel of Leith, she had experienced a second paroxysm from the ruptured blood vessel ; but had been conveyed back to Roskelyn in a litter, where, after languishing some days, her revengeful and vindictive spirit had taken its everlasting flight. Even in the sorrow of the moment, the exultation of the Lord of Roskelyn could not be entirely suppressed, when he announced the youthful Montrose as his son to his vassals. In their hearts, whatever might be their outward semblance, pleasure reigned ; for the countess was too much disliked to be truly mourned by her dependents ; and the open mein and mild demeanour of

Montrose, gave the promise of a kind ruler.

Ronaldsa who, in the city, had learned the death of the countess, hastened to join his friend at Roskelyn; where he remained till the rites of the church, and the duties to the dead, were fulfilled; after which they resolved to return to Monteith.

On inquiry, they learned that Sir John Stuart, though severely wounded, had survived, and returned to England; an information that gave pleasure to all.

Passing Stirling, they paid their duty to the sovereign; who testified his satisfaction at the events which had transpired, and congratulated them on the intended union of their families; promising that he would interest himself to procure the consent of the church.

Apprized by a messenger of the death of the countess, they, on their arrival

at Monteith, found the first effusion of Matilda's grief settled into a calm melancholy. At first she had accused herself of hastening her mother's death ; but the second paroxysm seizing her at the chapel of Leith being concealed from her knowledge, the mild admonitions of Ambrosine had in time their full effect ; and, daily assisting for a month in the mass that was said for her soul's rest, she at length became composed.

Monteith, who saw that all parties would be better for a change of place, and the variety of travelling, proposed a journey to Kintail ; which was accordingly agreed on and executed.

From thence they proceeded to the fortress, spreading comfort and assistance among the islanders ; who declared that, from this visit, they were convinced that their beloved chief, uncorrupted by courts, had not forsaken them. From
the

the Hebrides they sailed to the Orkneys, where, after passing a short time at the castle of Ronaldsa, they returned to Scotland, visiting the estates of their several friends in their way.

The dowager accompanied them during the whole excursion ; frequently declaring, that such happiness had latterly been her lot, that she looked upon herself as the most blessed of all parents. To her intentions in regard to the young St. Clair she firmly adhered, making him heir to all she possessed ; as she truly observed, the demesnes of Roskelyn were amply sufficient for Montrose, and those of Monteith for her grandson James.

Matilda was not deaf to the vows of Ronaldsa, though she claimed a year's probation to be given to the memory of her mother ; an arrangement in which Ambrosine supported her, and in which Mon-

Montrose, however against his will, was obliged to coincide. That time elapsed, in which the consent of the church was obtained, the parties were united in the presence of the king, who loaded them with gifts, and shewed them every mark of honour.

Universal rejoicings through the different domains took place; the brothers, united by the marriage of their children, bespoke a tie doubly strengthened, and which was yet more strongly cemented in the course of a year, by the birth of a son to Montrose. By the request of Roskelyn, the child bore the name of Randolph, in commemoration that his father had so long and honourably used it.

Matilda also became a mother; and never had she cause to repent her confidence in Ronaldsa; who, mild as
brave,

brave, in the husband never forgot the lover.

The dowager, during her life, passed some months every year with her different relatives ; bettered by their example, more prepared, and less afraid to die.

Amidst the rising virtues and bravery of their children, Monteith and Ambrosine grew insensibly old, the pride of their vassals, the scourge of the oppressor, and the protectors of the needy ; like meteors, drawing a bright track to direct their posterity to follow.

The friends of Monteith were seldom many months absent from him ; though Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, resided on their different domains : to the last of whom Montrose generously insisted on giving up the bequest of Randolph ; but which was as generously refused.

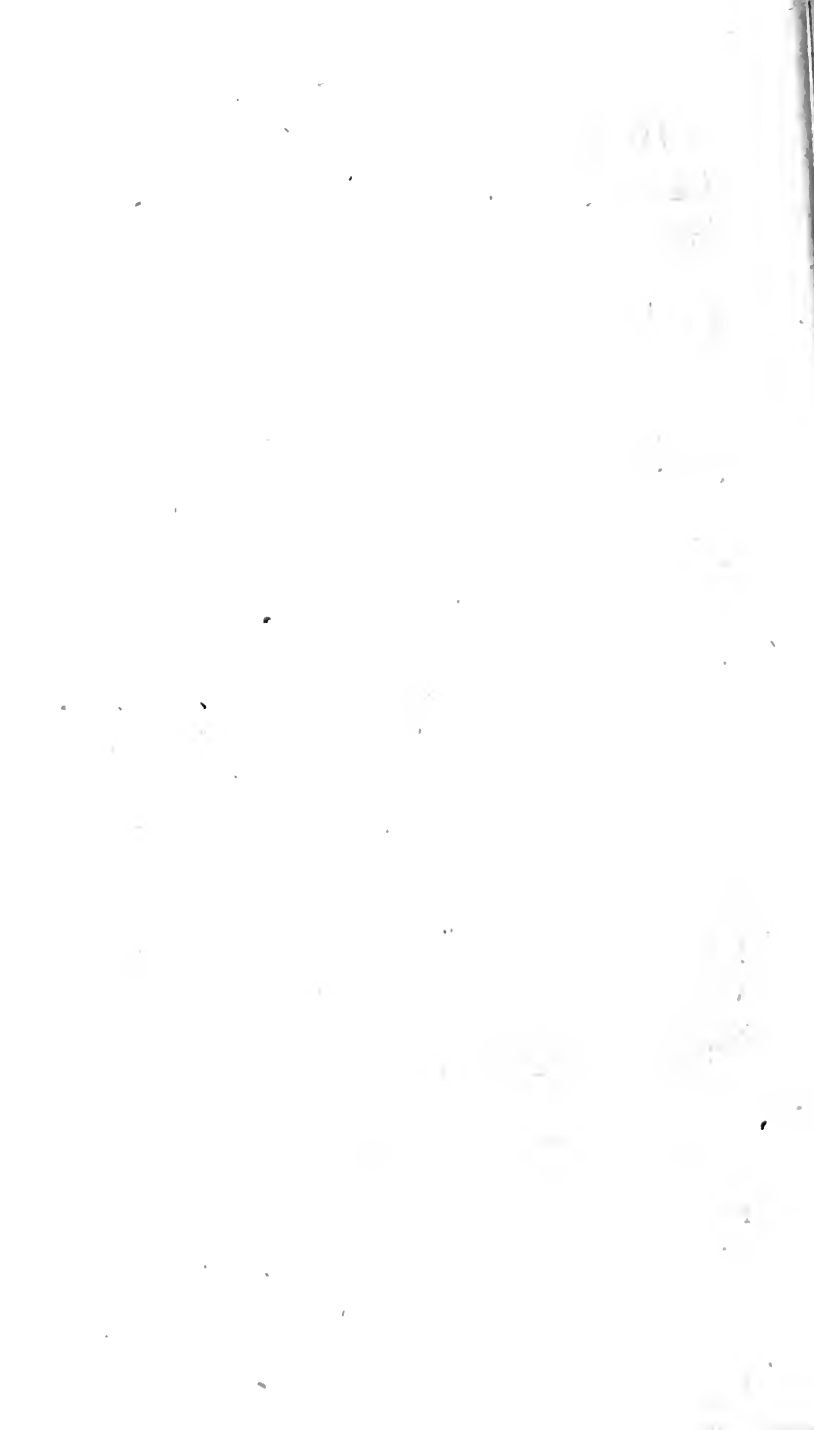
De

De Bourg remained the chief's constant companion; increasing years damping none of his natural vivacity.

Roskelyn, enervated in youth by the false tenderness of his mother, from the example of Monteith, shook off his weakness, and became truly dear to the chief, and honoured and beloved by his son.

For Montrose and Phillippa, from their infancy warmly attached to each other, marriage only joined their hands, whose hearts long before had been united: no discordant passions vexed them; but, after the example of Monteith and Ambrosine, each ruling without either feeling the sway, mutual truth, faith, and love, sanctioned the pleasure of their youthful days, and riveted an affection, which neither time, chance, nor age, could destroy.

THE END.













UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 046434095